THE NOVELS OF NAT GOULD

PUBLISHED BY THE HOUSE OF JOHN LONG, LTD.

SALES NOW EXCEED 21 MILLION COPIES

8s. 6d. net. Library Edition. Crown 8vo, Cloth. Wrapper in 3 Colours.

THE WIZARD OF THE TURF
NEVER IN DOUBT
LOST AND WON
BREAKING THE RECORD
FAST AS THE WIND

THE STEEPLECHASER
THE SWEEP WINNER
AT STARTING PRICE
THE RAKE (*January* 1921)
A DERBY WINNER (*June* 1921)

2s. net. F'cap 8vo, 256 pages. Attractively bound. Wrapper in 3 Colours.

The Silver Star (*Never before published*)
A Chestnut Champion (*Never before published*)
Racing Rivals (*Never before published*)
Odds On (*Never before published*)
Left in the Lurch (*Fifth printing*)

NEW VOLUMES 1921

In the Paddock (*Never before published*)
The Blue Ribbon (*Never before published*)
A Bad Start (*Never before published*)
The Demon Wins (*Never before published*)

NEW VOLUMES 1921 *continued*

A Dangerous Stable (*Never before published*)
The Man from Newmarket (*Never before published*)
A Long Shot (*Never before published*)
A Great Coup (*Filmed*)
The Chance of a Lifetime (*Filmed*)
A Fortune at Stake (*Filmed*)
A Gamble for Love (*Filmed*)
A Turf Conspiracy (*Filmed*)
At Starting Price (*1st Cheap Edn*).

1s. net. Demy 8vo. 128 pages. Thread sewn. Paper Cover in 3 Colours.

1 One of a Mob
2 The Selling Plater
3 A Bit of a Rogue
4 The Lady Trainer
5 A Straight Goer
6 A Hundred to one Chance
7 A Sporting Squatter
8 The Pet of the Public
9 Charger and Chaser
10 The Lottery Colt
11 A Stroke of Luck
12 The Top Weight
13 The Dapple Grey
14 Whirlwind's Year
15 The Little Wonder
16 A Bird in Hand
17 The Buckjumper
18 The Jockey's Revenge
19 The Pick of the Stable
20 The Stolen Racer
21 A Reckless Owner
22 The Roarer
23 The Lucky Shoe
24 Queen of the Turf
25 A Great Coup (*Filmed*)
26 The King's Favourite
27 A Cast Off
28 Good at the Game
29 The Chance of a Lifetime (*Filmed*)
30 A Member of Tatt's
31 The Trainer's Treasure
32 The Phantom Horse
33 The Head Lad
34 The Best of the Season
35 The Flyer
36 The White Arab
37 A Fortune at Stake (*Filmed*)
38 A Gamble for Love (*Filmed*)
39 The Wizard of the Turf
40 Never in Doubt
41 Left in the Lurch
42 Lost and Won
43 A Turf Conspiracy (*Filmed*)
44 Breaking the Record
45 The Smasher
46 A Northern Crack
47 The Rider in Khaki
48 Won on the Post

*** Entirely New Long Library Novels by Mr. Nat Gould, and also Reprints of his already published Novels, will be issued from time to time in various editions.

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12-14 Norris Street, Haymarket, London

Sole Publishers of all Mr. Nat Gould's Latest Novels as shown above

In the High Woods

By

Theodore Goodridge Roberts

Author of
"Love on Smoky River" "Blessington's Folly,"
"Forest Fugitives," "Jess of the River,"
"The Exiled Lover," etc.

POPULAR EDITION

London
John Long, Limited
12, 13 & 14 Norris Street, Haymarket
(*All rights reserved*)

JOHN LONG'S CHEAP NOVELS

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME IN PRICE AND STYLE

40	THE GARMENT OF IMMORTALITY	ALICE & CLAUDE ASKEW
19	LEFT IN THE LURCH	NAT GOULD
41	A CHESTNUT CHAMPION (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
42	ODDS ON (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
43	RACING RIVALS (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
44	THE SILVER STAR (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
45	THE BREATH OF SUSPICION	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
46	THE MAN ABOUT TOWN	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
47	COMING OF AGE	RICHARD MARSH
48	THE DEACON'S DAUGHTER	RICHARD MARSH
49	FOREST FUGITIVES	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
50	A FLIRTATION WITH TRUTH	CURTIS YORKE
51	MISS DAFFODIL	CURTIS YORKE
52	THE VISION OF THE YEARS	CURTIS YORKE
53	THE WORLD AND DELIA	CURTIS YORKE
54	THE SNAKE GARDEN	AMY J. BAKER
55	MOONFLOWER	AMY J. BAKER
56	ALTON OF SOMASCO	HAROLD BINDLOSS
57	RANCHER CARTERET	HAROLD BINDLOSS
58	ALISON'S ADVENTURE	HAROLD BINDLOSS
59	THE MAN WHO KNEW ALL	MARIE C. LEIGHTON
60	THE MYSTERY OF THE THREE FINGERS	MARIE C. LEIGHTON
61	ALIX OF THE GLEN	CURTIS YORKE
62	DELPHINE	CURTIS YORKE
63	ONLY BETTY	CURTIS YORKE
64	MOLLIE DEVERILL	CURTIS YORKE
65	WAYWARD ANNE	CURTIS YORKE
66	QUEER LITTLE JANE	CURTIS YORKE
67	THE WOMAN RUTH	CURTIS YORKE
68	ENCHANTED	CURTIS YORKE
69	JESS OF THE RIVER	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
70	THE EXILED LOVER	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
71	A GREAT COUP (Filmed)	NAT GOULD
72	THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME (Filmed)	NAT GOULD
73	A FORTUNE AT STAKE (Filmed)	NAT GOULD
74	A GAMBLE FOR LOVE (Filmed)	NAT GOULD
75	A TURF CONSPIRACY (Filmed)	NAT GOULD
76	BLESSINGTON'S FOLLY	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
77	IN THE HIGH WOODS	THEODORE G. ROBERTS
78	THE TOCSIN	ALICE & CLAUDE ASKEW
79	OUR ALTY	M. E. FRANCIS
80	THE BARTENSTEIN CASE	J. S. FLETCHER
81	MR. BEKE OF THE BLACKS	JOHN AYSCOUGH
82	AT STARTING PRICE (First Cheap Edition)	NAT GOULD
83	IN THE PADDOCK (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
84	THE BLUE RIBBON (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
85	A BAD START (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
86	THE DEMON WINS (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
87	A DANGEROUS STABLE (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
88	THE MAN FROM NEWMARKET (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
89	A LONG SHOT (Never before published)	NAT GOULD
90	THE GREAT GAY ROAD (Filmed)	TOM GALLON
91	DEAR YESTERDAY	AMY J. BAKER
21	THE LURE OF CROONING WATER (Filmed)	MARION HILL

JOHN LONG, LTD., 12—14 NORRIS ST., HAYMARKET, LONDON

IN THE HIGH WOODS

CHAPTER I

THE SPEECHLESS STRANGER

It was late in September, and Dan Mitchell was hunting for his steers and young cattle, on which he had not set eyes since the middle of May. This was the second day of his search. He was even now on the edge of the alder and willow-grown wild meadows in which he expected to find the animals.

He knew that wilderness, for twenty miles up and downstream and for many miles back from both sides of the river, better than he knew any printed book, and he knew the ways of horned cattle, turned adrift to forage for themselves through the short summer, as well as the ways of moose and caribou.

He was in no hurry on this mellow September morning. He felt quite sure that he was somewhere within five or six miles of his herd, and he was waiting for Sol Gabe. Sol Gabe, a full-blooded Maliseet Indian, had promised to meet him at a certain hour, at a certain place, and to help him drive his cattle upstream to his clearings. He and Sol were old friends—and Sol, who was a "good Injun," always kept his appointments with his friends. So Dan Mitchell, having breakfasted and

made up his pack, lit his pipe and wandered down to the river.

The autumn rains had not yet come to swell the river. It was still at summer size, a mere brook of golden and amber water trickling and twisting its way among grey boulders and slipping across patches of bright sand and pebbles far down in the bottom of the rugged and narrow valley. Dan stood at the top of the bank for a minute, gazing down and across the valley to where, about a quarter of a mile away, the bank of the river dipped and the rolling vasts of black-foliaged spruce and fir gave way to the pale green of stunted willows and the stagnant green of alders. The varied greens of the wild, uncleared meadows were brightened here and there by the yellow and red torches of frost-nipped birches and sumacs; and here and there great elms, showing yellow in their feathery crowns, loomed above the meaner growth.

Dan Mitchell turned his gaze from the hazy levels of the distant meadows to the trickling river directly below him. He opened his mouth with a gasp of astonishment, and his pipe dropped from between his teeth. Being a woodsman, he stooped immediately, in spite of his astonishment, recovered his pipe and trod out the burning tobacco that had spilled from it to the dry moss. Then he started down the bank.

"It's a man," he muttered. "Stranger, too—an' sick, I guess—or maybe dead. What t'hell! Arm all tied up in white cotton!"

He scrambled a few yards lower, then halted, staring. He wasn't a coward, by any standard of courage; but there was something about this stranger and the circumstances of his appearance on the edge

of the shrunken river at a point fifteen miles from any farm and forty miles from the nearest settlement, that chilled his blood like news of disaster or a horror in a dream. And just then the stranger, who was seated with his right shoulder to him, turned his head and looked at him.

Dan Mitchell felt a cold chill, unreasoning and unfamiliar, run from his scalp down the back of his neck. The face that was turned to him was large and, at the moment, grey with pain or despair. The lips were twisted, the cheeks furrowed, and the gaze of the dark eyes was fixed, angry and pitiful. The stranger lay with his shoulders against a slab of stone, his body sagged, his legs sprawled lifelessly.

"What t'hell!" exclaimed the woodsman nervously.

The stranger moved his head and stared upward. Slowly he raised his right arm, which was heavily bandaged from the tip to the elbow in white linen; but he did not call out. His eyes looked terrible to the woodsman—like black holes in the big face—like the eyes of an owl.

"Hullo!" cried Dan. "Hullo, stranger! What ye doin' thar?"

The other made no reply. His lips did not move. His bandaged arm sank back to his side. His left arm seemed to be pinned under him against the slab of rock. But his round black eyes continued to stare up at the woodsman with a bottomless, compelling regard. A little breath of wind fanned up from the river and brought to Dan Mitchell's nose a heavy, pungent, drearily suggestive odour.

Years before, when working as a riverman on the St. John, a friend of his had lost an arm in a sawmill, and Dan had frequently visited the friend

in the little hospital. There, in the hospital, he had smelled that heavy, pungent odour. It had clung about his suffering friend. It had filled the bare ward—the whole dreary building. It was the scent of iodoform; but Dan had never asked the name of it. He was young then; and now, a middle-aged man, far from the days of his youth and the broad St. John, it came to him again and conjured a picture in his mind of a dreary ward, narrow beds of suffering, a sharp-voiced nurse, and a friend whom he had not thought of in twenty years.

"Hullo!" he shouted. "What ails ye? How'd ye come thar?"

The stranger opened his mouth, as if to speak, then shut it—shut it so tight that the muscles of the jaws stood out.

"Speak, can't ye?" bawled Dan, in a sudden, unreasoning fit of anger bred of bewilderment and the tragic odour in the air.

But the man by the river did not speak. He blinked his eyes and made a slight movement with his bandaged arm as if to lift it up again. Dan's heart fluttered at that with an emotion unpleasantly akin to fear. That bandaged arm daunted him like a monstrosity, though why he did not know. He forced himself to continue the descent and cross the rock-cluttered floor of the shrunken river. The stranger made no effort to move or get to his feet at his approach, but continued to stare at him, with his head twisted over his shoulder.

And now the woodsman saw that food and drink, blankets and a tarpaulin lay beside the intruder. The food was in two canvas bags, one of which, being untied, displayed some sort of hard biscuits. The drink, whatever its nature, was in a large stone

jug. It was evident that the blankets had been used during the night. The ashes and black coals of a small fire lay near at hand.

Dan Mitchell stood within six feet of the stranger and looked at him. His heart was beating again at its normal pace. Here was a matter most unusual and interesting. He saw that the stranger was well past middle age, large of figure as well as of face, with small, grey whiskers in front of his ears. The eyes showed some colour at close range, but they were very dark, opaque, and unpleasant. The face also was unpleasant, though pitiful in the lines and grey tintings of suffering. He wore old boots, soiled and ragged trousers, a flannel shirt, and a coat that seemed to be much too small for him.

"I'd like to know how the devil ye got here, and what ye come for," said Dan, having recovered his usual composure. "Ye couldn't hev come up-stream as far as this here by canoe, and ye couldn't hev brought that thar kit any distance, with yer lame arm. Are ye a sport? Ye don't look like it, in them old clothes; but, ag'in, ye don't look like anything else I ever see. Where're yer friends? An' what's the matter with yer arm?"

The stranger shook his head. Little drops of sweat glistened on his broad face and trickled to his chin.

"Speak, can't ye?" roared Dan. "Ye've got a tongue, haven't ye?"

The stranger blinked his round, unwavering eyes swiftly, then opened his mouth wide. His mouth was large, and he held it open to its full extent. Dan gazed at it curiously, wonderingly. He noticed, first of all, that several of the back teeth were capped with gold; then, his glance adventuring farther, he

saw that which caused him to jump backward with a cry of dismay and horror. His seasoned face lost colour.

"Cut out!" he exclaimed, trembling. "Cut out, by Heaven!"

The stranger shut his mouth and again nodded his head. His eyes glowed in their black, thick depths. Fury and despair twisted his face. A groan issued from his grey lips. He raised his bandaged arm toward the clear sky with a menacing gesture, then let it sink slowly back to his side.

Dan Mitchell turned from the stranger and looked stupidly up and down the bright valley of the river. The shallow water shone gold here, silver there, and lay like clearest amber in the little pools. A kingfisher flew from bank to bank, with its rattling cry, a thing of burnished blue. A hawk wheeled high up against the blue dome. A black and yellow butterfly sunned itself on a warm boulder in midstream, spreading and closing its wings slowly. A breath of sun-steeped air came down the valley, fragrant with the exhaling spirit of pennyroyal and wild mint. From somewhere in the spruces came the muffled, elusive thunder of a drumming partridge. All was peaceful, natural, sweet, and true to the place and the season—all save this tongueless, bandaged, grey-faced stranger reclining there against the slab of rock, with his food and drink beside him, and hell in his opaque eyes.

"How'd he git here?" mumbled the woodsman to himself. "Where's the others? Lord, who cut out his tongue, I'd like to know!"

"How do, Dan?" remarked a voice from the top of the bank.

Mitchell turned as if he had been fired upon;

but his nerves grew quiet, and relief shone in his face at the sight of his friend, Sol Gabe.

"How do, Sol, how do?" he replied. "Come along down here, will ye? Got something to show ye."

The Maliseet began to descend the steep bank; but, half-way down, he caught sight of the stranger for the first time. He paused for a second, then continued his descent without a word. He passed the silent, motionless figure without a glance and stood beside Dan Mitchell.

"What d'ye make of it, Sol?" queried Dan, indicating with a wave of his hand the stranger, who was staring at them unflinchingly.

"Where you git 'im, Dan?" returned the Maliseet. "What he doin' thar, anyhow? I don't see no canoe down-river nowhere."

"Found him here a couple of minutes ago," said Dan. "Queer, ain't it? He give me a fright when I fust see him. Ain't got no tongue. Some feller's cut it out of him, by the looks of things. Hell, ain't it?"

Sol Gabe gazed curiously but politely at the man without a tongue. He did not ask any questions of Dan or the stranger, but stood motionless and silent for several minutes, with his inquiring eyes on that grey face. He turned suddenly and in silence moved along the edge of the twisting, shallow water, staring down at the sand and rocks and pebbles under his stride. So he moved away for a distance of thirty paces or more, then halted, glanced up and around, turned and came slowly back. He paused several times and stopped to examine the ground. He halted beside Dan, who had been watching him intently. The stranger also had passively followed

his every step with wide eyes. The Indian placed a black leather pocket-book in his friend's hand.

"Find this," he said; "yes, an' plenty track. Not his, no. Moccasin track—an' him wear boots."

"Sure," replied Dan, turning the long bill book over and over in his stubby brown hand. "Moccasin tracks, ye say? Aye, and he's got boots on him. Carried here, I cal'late."

He stepped forward and extended the pocket-book to the stranger. Though the big man shifted his position a little and brought his left arm to view from behind his back, he did not offer to take the pocket-book. He shook his head, and his lips twisted scornfully. He put out his left hand, which was slender and well-cared for, and plucked at the cork in the big jug. The cork was driven in tightly. His fingers pulled at it in vain.

Dan did not notice this, for he was staring intently at the empty interior of the pocket-book; but Sol Gabe noticed it and came swiftly forward. He pulled a knife from his pocket and opened a corkscrew from the horn handle. He looked at the stranger, and the stranger nodded his head. So he extracted the cork and sniffed at the neck of the jug. He sniffed again critically, and closed one eye. The stranger passed him a tin mug impatiently. Sol filled the mug from the jug with loving care, and gave it slowly into the stranger's left hand. The liquid vanished in three seconds. The stranger sighed and set the mug down on the sand. Again Sol Gabe tilted the jug above the smaller vessel. The stranger nodded. Sol poured, drank deep, and smacked his lips. Then he replaced the cork in the jug.

"Empty!" said Dan, referring to the pocket-

book in his hand. "Ain't so much as a one-dollar bill into it."

"Jug not empty," replied Sol. "Darn fine drink, you bet."

"That so? What kinder drink?"

"Lime juice. Lime juice *and* whisky, I guess. Darn good, anyhow."

Dan poured a mugful and swallowed it. He closed his eyes and opened them slowly. Like the Maliseet, he smacked his lips. Then he wagged his head and placed the empty mug in the stranger's lap.

"Forgit it," he said. "Forgit it, Sol Gabe. A wile of the devil! We ain't found the cattle yit, let alone driv' 'em home; nor we ain't come to no conclusion yit about this here stranger. Who brought him here—an' what for? An' what do we mean to do with him? Forgit the jug, Sol Gabe, an' fetch yer mind down to business."

Gabe nodded his head earnestly, then stooped forward and examined the stranger's bandaged right arm. His smoky brow grew furrowed. He extended a finger and touched the end of the bandage delicately, then drew back sharply with a grunt of dismay and raised his eyes to the stranger's face. The stranger smiled grimly, with a terrible sort of mirth in the twist of his lips and the glow of his eyes.

"Hand's gone, too!" exclaimed the Maliseet. "Hand's cut off, too!"

Dan Mitchell cried aloud. He trembled from head to foot and turned sickly white under his tan.

"Hell's work, Sol Gabe," he whispered. "Hell's work bin done here. Aye, by the A'mighty! An' by a man who knowed his business, too."

The stranger, who had been gazing at the

woodsman earnestly, now nodded his head in assent.

"By a doctor, sure!" whispered Dan. "Look at the bandage."

Again the stranger made signs of assent. Then he raised his left hand to his mouth and nose, cupped it and held it there lightly, then sank back against the rock and closed his eyes. Dan Mitchell and Sol Gabe watched him, puzzled, but anxious to understand. They knew that he was trying to tell them something in a sign language of his own. He removed his hand slowly from his face, and with his eyes still shut, lying as if insensible, he fumbled on the beach beside him until his fingers encountered a small, water-worn stick about six inches long. Still with his eyes closed, he raised the stick to his face and opened his mouth. Then he lowered it to his maimed arm and described a circular cut at the wrist. Then Dan Mitchell understood.

He remembered what his friend of long ago had told him of the sweet-smelling stuff the doctor had put him to sleep with before removing the mangled limb. He understood that some one had put this stranger to sleep with the same stuff, and had then cut off his right hand and his tongue. So it had been done in cold blood, all decently and in order, like a surgical operation! This made it seem more terrible to the woodsman than if it had been done swiftly and unskilfully, without antiseptic dressings, at the urge of fury.

"Yes," he exclaimed. "I know what you mean."

The stranger opened his eyes and sat up. There was some colour in his lips now. Dan explained the dumb play to the Maliseet, who was deeply impressed by the horror of it.

"Some feller hate 'im bad," he remarked fearfully, glancing up the rocky valley, then down it, then behind him at the high forest. "Fix 'im so he don't tell nothin' 'bout it, anyhow," he added.

"Give him another drink," said Dan Mitchell. "An' maybe he's hungry. Are ye hungry, boss?"

The stranger shook his head, but extended his hand to the jug. The Indian helped him to a drink.

"Cal'late I better take him home," said Dan. "Can't leave him here, that's sure. Stay right where ye set, mister, an' me an' Sol Gabe'll go down to the medders an' look 'round for the cattle. We'll be back afore sundown, at latest. Guess yer safe till we git back. The fellers who cut ye up wouldn't be hangin' round, I'm thinkin'."

The stranger glanced around him apprehensively.

"He's scart," said Sol. "Maybe you give 'im yer gun, Dan."

Both the woodsmen carried guns. Both were muzzle-loading shotguns.

"What d'ye cal'late he's scart of?" asked Dan. "What would he shoot at? Them fellers who cut him up wouldn't be waitin' 'round."

"He scart o' wild cat, maybe, or b'ar," replied Sol Gabe. "Don't know no better. T'ink cat or b'ar come eat 'im. Give 'im gun, Dan."

The stranger put out his left hand toward Dan's weapon.

"Maybe we'll see a deer," said Mitchell. "Give him yer own gun."

"Nobody fire 'im off but me," replied Sol. "Me know his tricks. Me pull trigger, he wait one, two, three second, some time—then bang! He not go off at all for nobody else. Darn good gun, anyhow."

Dan Mitchell, who was a good-natured fellow, placed his weighty duck-gun in the stranger's hand.

"Now be easy with it," he cautioned. "She's a'mighty light on the triggers—specially the right trigger. Don't ye go an' git scart now, an' let her off to call us back, because we won't come back much afore sundown, lest we find the cattle sooner. The left bar'l got a bullet in her, an' the right's loaded with buckshot."

The stranger nodded his head eagerly, glanced all round, laid the weapon on the ground beside him and covered it with one of his blankets. There was a little colour in his broad cheeks now, and a light of purpose in his black eyes. He leaned back against the slab of rock, slipped his hand into a pocket of the coat that was too small for him, and produced a flat leather case. The woodsmen watched him curiously. They saw, by a patch of lighter tint and several small holes, that a plate of some sort had been torn from the front of the case. Ten to one the plate had been engraved with the initial letters of the owner's name. The stranger opened the case, after a great deal of fumbling, and extracted a long cigar. Sol Gabe struck a match and held it for him. Then the woodsmen set off down the empty valley, leaving the maimed stranger where they had found him, puffing at his cigar, and with his jug of lime juice and whisky convenient to his left elbow.

"What d'ye make of it, Sol?" asked Dan Mitchell.

"Guess some fellers hate that feller darn bad," replied the other.

CHAPTER II

NEW TRAGEDY

DAN MITCHELL and Sol Gabe talked of nothing but the stranger as they made their way down the valley toward the wild meadows. With all their talk, they could formulate no theory that struck them as a solution of the mystery. They agreed that the stranger was a city-bred man and a person of importance. Sol had known a couple of New York sportsmen of the heavy, big-money type, and Dan had seen capitalists on the big river in the days of his youth. This tongueless stranger suggested fortunes and large affairs in spite of his shabby clothing. As they descended the bed of the river they kept their eyes alert for tracks and signs. They found the footprints of two men in moccasins, pointing both ways; and at the upper corner of the meadow they discovered the marks of the stranger's boots.

"Reckon they must hev carried him from hereabouts," said Dan. "They could work up this far in a canoe, I cal'late."

"Sure," replied the Maliseet, and pointed to a spot on the edge of the low, willow-tangled shore where a canoe had been landed and a fire made. "Sure t'ing, Dan; but they portage a lot 'tween here an' the mouth o' the river." He advanced to the ashes of the fire, and examined them, turning them lightly with his finger. "Las' night, I guess,"

he said. "Rain yesterday mornin'. No rain on this fire, anyhow."

They parted company then to hunt singly for the cattle. The wild meadows were of vast extent, but the cattle were sure to be within a few miles of the front because of the water. It had been an exceptionally dry summer and autumn, and so most of the water-holes back from the river would be dry. Mitchell struck directly into the warm brush and hip-deep grass of the meadow, and Sol Gabe went on down stream along the edge of the low shore to enter the meadow several miles below. The Maliseet carried his eccentric gun over his shoulder, muzzle to the front in true backwoods fashion. It was a sinister-looking weapon, with a rusty iron butt plate, a patched butt, and the breech bound around with copper wire. The hammer shook like a dead leaf, and the nipple was red with rust, and the ramrod was home-made; and yet Sol had done some fine shooting with this ancient and crippled piece. Dan was unarmed save for his belt axe. Both men carried a "snack" of bread and cold pork for the midday meal.

Dan put the case of the maimed stranger from his mind for the time being, and gave all his attention to the search for his cattle. Sol Gabe could not turn his mind entirely from the mysterious stranger. As he moved along the shore he kept a look-out for signs of the unknown visitors as well as for signs of the cattle. Along the front of the meadow the water was deeper than it was farther upstream, and it ran more slowly over a bottom of mixed sand and black mud. He saw plenty of signs of his friend's cattle, and of moose and deer as well. Here and there the soft shore was cut

deep by the hoofs of animals that had come down to drink. Narrow paths led from the pools into the tangles of the meadow. Some of these paths were freshly trodden. Any one of them might guide him to within sound of the bell worn by the leader of the herd. But he continued to descend the river, unwilling to turn his back on any possible chance of learning more about the visitors. And might it not be that they were still lurking in the vicinity? He moved cautiously, in silence, between the still water and the wall of alders and willows. He placed a cap on the rusty nipple of his gun.

He had travelled about two miles along the front of the meadows when something small and red caught his eye. It lay at the edge of the water. It was an empty cigarette box, with the inscription in gold across the red cover: "Imperial Turkish, Superfine." He tucked it away in his pocket. It was something to show to Dan and to talk over. It had evidently been tossed to the shore from the canoe, for there were no footprints near it. His eyes were sharp to notice anything out of tone with the natural aspect of the wilderness, and so it was that, half a mile farther along, he made another discovery. Where a plume of willow thrust out and overhung a little pool, forcing him to leave the shore and wade into the stream, he found a red and brown trout fly and several inches of catgut hanging from a branch of the willow. He detached it, examined it curiously, then fastened it in his hat. The feathers of the fly were fresh and bright, and the hook was clean. It had not been out in the weather for more than a day or two.

What more likely than that one of the unknown visitors had lost it while casting into the pool from

a canoe? The people who had brought the big stranger into this country had been fishing—the people who had amputated his tongue and his right hand and then left him in the wilderness. On their way up or their way down, they had paused to fish for trout! Were they devils or humans? Sol Gabe, standing knee-deep in the river and staring at the bright fly which he had just fastened in the crown of his hat, felt his scalp wrinkle with horror and a cold trickle as of ice-water go down his spine. He clapped his hat on his head and gazed searchingly downstream. The sunlit valley was empty for as far as he could see. He turned and waded ashore, with the forefinger of his right hand on the trigger of his gun. His appetite for information concerning the mysterious visitors had suddenly failed.

"Don't like 'im," he exclaimed. "A'mighty bad men, I guess. Cut me up, too, maybe, if they catch me. Better quit—yes."

He found a track in the black soil, and followed it into the jungle of alders and willows and tall clumps of seeded grass. The little trout fly entangled in the willow had enlightened him as nothing else had as to the cold-blooded deviltry of the people who had so recently fouled this peaceful river with their presence.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when Sol Gabe heard the bell of the leader of the herd clanking steadily toward the river. He struck toward the sound on a long slant. A few minutes later he heard Dan Mitchell whistle shrilly three times. He replied in kind, and soon came up with Dan and the heel of the herd.

"Guess I got the hull of 'em," said Dan, wiping the sweat from his eyes with the back of his hand.

"We'll have easy drivin' as soon as we git 'em into the river an' above the medders. You went huntin' too far down, Sol."

Sol Gabe told of his discoveries. Dan was shaken by the significance of the trout fly. He examined it closely, then turned his attention to the cigarette box. Inside the cover he found the price.

"Fifty cents," he said. "Fifty cents for ten little smokes that's no more than a puff apiece. Sol, that's expensive smokin'. Them fellers is rich—rich, an' darned cold-blooded. I hope to gracious they're gone clean out of the country by now, an' don't never mean to come back."

"Hope so," said Sol Gabe, sending a roving glance all around among the brooding thickets. "Hope so, you bet."

They got the herd safely into the bed of the stream at the upper corner of the flats. The cattle waded into the shallow water and began to drink. Dan counted them slowly, with moving lips and wagging finger. The list was complete—sixteen head in all. The leader was a big, red three-year-old steer, as tame as a dog in spite of his long summer in the unfenced pastures.

The cattle were lifting their dripping muzzles from the water, and Dan had finished the count, when a dull report came thumping down the twilight valley. The cattle raised their heads and gazed mildly upstream. The two men looked at each other with questioning eyes.

"Guess he git lonely an' shoot yer gun," remarked Sol Gabe. "Pretty nigh sundown, anyhow."

He tried to speak casually, but there was a tremor of uneasiness in his voice.

"Guess yer right," said Dan. "Aye, the sun's

down." But he did not sound convincing even to himself. "We'd better be steppin'," he added.

So they stepped along, driving the cattle before them up the valley. The big, red steer took the lead, steading the rest and encouraging them with his clanking bell. As guide and guardian of the herd, he was worth more to Dan than as beef, though he was in the pink of condition. The yearlings did a great deal of frisking and racing and dodging, but they made no serious attempt to leave the valley.

At the top of the right bank of the river, within a hundred yards of the spot where they had left the stranger, Dan and Sol Gabe had fenced in a small, natural clearing among the spruces, to serve as a corral for the cattle on their way each fall from the wild meadows to the homestead. The red steer knew this stopping-place, and led the way up to it. The others crowded after him, pranced through the gap, and immediately fell to browsing on the sweet, thin upland grass. The men put up the poles across the gap, and hastened onward.

The stranger was not where they had left him, but Dan's gun, with both barrels discharged, lay beside the blankets and food. And the jug was still in its place. Sol stooped and examined the shingle, looked up, and pointed across the stream. There was the stranger, standing among some small spruces and cedars half-way up the opposite bank.

"Hey, thar!" cried Dan. "What ye doin'? What was ye shootin' at?"

The big man turned and waved his left hand. "Come on!" said Dan; and the two crossed the shallow stream and scrambled up the bank. The stranger moved aside as they came up to him, and though dusk was thickening in the valley they

could see a victorious, derisive smile on his broad face.

"What was ye shootin' at?" asked Dan. "We heard the shot."

The stranger pointed downward among the young trees at his feet. This clump of brush grew on a narrow terrace midway of the slope.

"Guess he hit somethin', a'right," said Sol. "B'ar, maybe."

Dan stooped and parted the branches with his hands. He stepped backward and collided with the Maliseet.

"A man!" he cried, in a choked voice.

Yes, it was a man that the tongueless one-armed stranger had shot. And the stranger seemed to be mighty proud of his performance. The grimace of terrible triumph deepened on his face. His eyes glowed with an inhuman light. He gesticulated with his left arm, trying to explain to the horror-stricken woodsmen how the deed had been done. He pointed across the stream to the place where he had been sitting close beside the little trickle of water. He pointed to the clump of young trees at his side. Then he showed how, slowly and stealthily, he had drawn the gun from beneath the blanket and brought the butt of it to his left shoulder. He pantomimed the quick aim, the pull of two fingers on the triggers, the staggering recoil of the gun against his shoulder. Then, with a fiendish grin, he clapped his single hand to his face, then turned and pointed to the thing among the bushes at his feet.

It was evident at a glance that the dead man had received the charges of both barrels in his face. The big, home-moulded bullet and the buckshot had done their work with a vengeance. That which

they had left could not properly be called a face. Neither Dan nor Sol Gabe were particularly squeamish about the sight of blood; but both felt sick at this thing. They turned their eyes hastily from the dead man to his slayer, but the face of the slayer was also a daunting sight. The expression of the eyes and mouth was diabolical.

"What did ye shoot him for? Who was he?" asked Dan.

The stranger pointed to his empty mouth, then to the tip of his bandaged right arm; then, with an indescribable gesture of hatred and gloating scorn, he pointed to the dead man at his feet.

"D'ye mean it was him cut off yer hand an' yer tongue?" asked Dan.

The stranger nodded. Dan and Sol Gabe exchanged glances. The big man watched them curiously, caught their attention and went through a gruesome dumb show of placing a rope around his neck. Then he jerked his head back, closed his eyes, and let his head loll limply upon his shoulder. A child could have read the question. Raising his head, he looked at Dan inquiringly.

"No," said Dan. "We'll not give ye up to the police for murder, if that's what ye mean. I ain't no lawyer, but I cal'late if any man cut off my tongue an' my right hand I'd go gunnin' for him. I don't know what it was ye done to deserve that treatment, but I guess it must hev bin somethin' pretty bad. Anyhow, yer safe with us, as far as shootin' that man is concerned. If murderin' folks has bin a habit of yers I cal'late we'll be hearin' somethin' about it before long. Maybe we better bury the man ye jist shot?"

The stranger nodded eagerly. He even extended

his left hand to the woodsmen; but it was ignored, first by Dan Mitchell, then by Sol Gabe. They returned to the other side of the stream and made camp. The stranger sat at the edge of the water, evidently in deep thought, while the others made the fire and cooked the evening meal. Beds of spruce boughs were laid, and all three lay down beneath their blankets soon after supper. The stranger was soon snoring, but it was late by the time the woodsmen closed their eyes. They were not afraid of ghosts, but for the first time in their lives they were conscious of an alien, menacing spirit in their secure valley.

Dan and Sol Gabe awoke early, and were astir by the first gleam of dawn. Without awaking the stranger, they crossed the stream and ascended the bank to where the body of the dead man lay stiff among the young spruces on the little terrace. A fox slid away before their approach. Fighting down their repugnance, they examined the clothing of the dead man, and went through his pockets. The pockets were empty save for a gold watch and a few loose coins. This puzzled them.

No letters, no papers of any kind; but how were they to know that the stranger had already gone through the pockets of his victim and burned a whole packet of personal and business letters, and a leather card-case in the fire on the other side of the stream? The clothing was of fine quality and distinguished cut—a brown tweed suit, a linen shirt with a soft front and soft collar, and the lightest of silk beneath. Only the grey woollen socks and low cow-hide moccasins were of the country. And this had been a young man—twenty-five years of age, it might be, or thirty-five at most. They knew

by the hair of the head, which was dark brown, without a thread of grey. The hands were tanned on the backs, but the palms and fingers were smooth and unmarked. A ring with a dark-green stone, uncut, encircled one finger.

After examining the watch the woodsmen returned it to the dead man's pocket. They were not the kind to rob the dead, and they vaguely felt that it would be risky to have in their possession the watch of a stranger who had come by a violent death in those woods. They went up to the top of the bank, and soon found a bushy hollow which suited their purpose. In the bottom of this hollow they dug a hole with pointed stakes, their hands and an axe for tools. It was slow, hard work. When the hole was deep enough they brought the dead man up and placed him in it, then covered him deep with forest mould and several large stones. On the top of all they spread living moss and several seedling spruces, which they had uprooted in their digging. They washed their hands in the river, and then, while the Maliseet built up the fire and commenced preparations for breakfast, Dan went along to the corral to see how his cattle were doing.

The stranger awoke while Sol Gabe was frying salt pork and pancakes. He sat up and stared around him anxiously for a moment. He looked at his bandaged arm, then at the Maliseet by the fire, and an expression of horror and rage twisted his face. He got quickly but heavily to his feet, and stood there, a tall, bulky figure, glaring across the rocky valley and trickle of brightening water. He shook his left fist at the spot on the opposite bank where his victim had fallen. Sol Gabe, squatting beside the fire, glanced up from the frying-pan

and beheld all this. He felt sorry for the stranger, although he did not like him.

"Dan and me bury 'im," he said. "He don't hurt you no more. We bury 'im a'mighty deep, gold watch and all."

The stranger turned and came over to the fire. He nodded at Sol with an attempt at a pleasant smile, then sat down and gazed at the little yellow flames with inscrutable eyes, nursing his bandaged arm in his lap. Twice he trembled violently, as if with a chill, but when Sol asked him if he felt cold he shook his head.

While the three were engaged with breakfast Dan suddenly asked the stranger his name. The stranger smiled, laid down the clasp knife with which he had been eating his pork and pancakes awkwardly enough, and with his hand cleared the pebbles from a strip of sand. Then, with his finger he printed five letters in the sand. The woodsmen watched him eagerly.

"S-m-i-t-h," spelled Dan aloud.

"Hell!" exclaimed the Maliseet, in disgust, and sat back and poured himself another cup of tea.

They cleaned the tea-kettle and tin mugs, packed, smothered the fire with sand, and drove the cattle out of the corral and into the bed of the stream. The stranger, Smith, insisted on carrying his share of the outfit. He lit one of his cigars, and strode up the rocky bed of the stream between his companions, at the heels of the herd, with an expression almost of contentment on his big, hard face. He carried his pack without effort. Dan had fastened it on his shoulders for him.

They had a fifteen-mile tramp ahead of them

and a slow tramp at that, for the cattle did not hurry, and halted frequently to crop at bunches of grass and weeds growing along the shores. Smith's darkling glances roved before him and on every side. He seemed interested in the men beside him, the cattle, and the country.

CHAPTER III

THE MITCHELLS AND THEIR HOME

By noon the herd and the herders were within four miles of Dan's farm, and still in the rocky bed of Rocky River. In the eleven miles which they had travelled since breaking camp they had passed no other sign of human occupation than a deserted and tumble-down lumber camp on the left bank of the stream.

"Cal'late we might's well keep right on," remarked Dan. "We ain't got far to go now, an' the old woman an' Ellen May will have dinner for us up to the house. D'ye feel able fer another four-mile ja'nt?"

Mr. Smith wiped the sweat from his face and nodded. But he pointed at the jug which Sol Gabe was carrying affectionately under his right arm. All three halted, the jug was lowered to the ground, and the tin mug circled twice. They were about to amble forward again after the ambling cattle when a sound of swishing brush among the spruces on their right turned all their faces to the high, bushy bank like a word of command. The thick-set young spruces and firs churned with the passage of some considerable body moving at no inconsiderable rate of speed. Next moment a shaggy three-year-old chestnut gelding, with a young girl astride its unsaddled back, burst from the brush and across the strip of shingle, and halted knee-deep in the

thin water of the stream. The gelding threw up its untidy head and snorted at the men in mock astonishment, then sank its head, straddled its fore-legs a trifle and began to drink. The girl slid from her perch, and from the far side of her mount gazed with frank amazement at the stranger.

"So it's you, Ellen May!" cried Dan, with delight in his voice. "I might hev knowed ye'd meet us hereabouts to lend a hand. An' ye've brought along a tasty little lunch for us, I'll bet a dollar."

The girl smiled and blushed. Now that she stood with her feet on the ground, looking over the three-year-old's high back, it was plain to be seen that she was not such a child as she had at first appeared. She must have been seventeen or eighteen years of age, at a rough guess, and well grown, though slender. Her style of dress was not in strict accordance with her age, for she wore her brown hair in two thick ropes down her back, a very short skirt, and a boy's flannel shirt. Her round arms were bare to the elbows, sun-tanned to a golden brown, and scratched generously by the underbrush through which she had ridden. Her face was sunburned, too, but not enough to hide or coarsen the delicate pink of her cheeks, or to roughen the skin. A few golden freckles just under her eyes and about the bridge of her small, shapely nose did not detract at all from the charm of her appearance. Her eyes were dark grey usually, but sometimes they were almost blue, and her mother had been heard to call them green. This was Ellen May, Dan Mitchell's only daughter, and his only child still true to the grey log house in the wilderness.

"You ride um colt too darn reckless, Ellen May,"

remarked Sol Gabe reprovingly. "You git twitched off one day, maybe, by brush."

"I got twitched off this morning, but it didn't hurt," said the girl, turning her glance from the stranger to her friend the Maliseet. And then, "I reckoned I'd meet you about here," she continued. "I've got a lunch for you, and a fresh custard pie, but I didn't know there would be three of you. Mother made pies this morning. And we'll have partridges for supper. I shot six of them yesterday."

"Good for you, Ellen May!" said Dan proudly. He looked at the stranger, who stood gazing curiously at the girl's face above the horse's back. "This here's Mr. Smith, a stranger to these parts," he continued. "He'll be stoppin' with us a spell, I cal'late, because he's bin hurt. This here's my daughter, Ellen May."

Smith lifted his felt hat and bowed. The girl bobbed her head at him across the gelding's back with a startled air. The lifting of hats in salutation is not a common performance in the backwoods of New Brunswick. Ellen May had not seen it done since she had come from the village on the big river, where she had lived with an aunt for three years and attended school. In Hawkville the mill-owner, the Church of England rector, the Methodist minister, and the postmaster, all lifted their hats to the women of the place; but on Rocky River it was not the thing to do at all. Ellen May liked it, however, though it made her feel silly. And why didn't this Mr. Smith say something?

"He's dumb," said Dan, reading the wonder and agitation in his daughter's face.

Smith nodded his head and smiled sardonically. The girl's eyes turned to him, suddenly dimmed with pity. And she glanced down at his bandaged arm with sweet concern in her face.

"He's bin hurt. He's bin hurt bad," said Dan. "Now, let's have that there lunch ye was talkin' about. I cal'late we kin take a spell off."

She unslung a small canvas bag from her shoulder, and gave it to her father, coming around from behind the horse to do so. She seemed to be somewhat ashamed of her short skirt, which reached only to her knees. The exposed limbs were certainly nothing to be ashamed of, slender yet shapely as they were, and encased in close-fitting deerskin leggings. Ellen May had cut and sewn these leggings herself, and a natural and commendable vanity had inspired her to make them very trim at the ankles and fitted to a wish from heel to knee. She wore "Indian-tanned" moccasins on her slender feet.

"I'll go on and keep the cattle from passing the gap," she said. "I don't want any lunch, because I've been eating gingerbread."

Without more ado, she scrambled to the horse's back, and rode up the bed of the stream at a hand gallop. The chestnut gelding was sure of foot and strong of leg, and accustomed to running over rough ground. The yearlings scampered to right and left before it, then stuck their thin tails straight in the air and galloped after it. The two-year-old heifers and steers, and the big leader, looked around at it, and decided promptly on a race. Ellen May hallooed with the joy of youth and health and excitement, and kicked the flanks of Red Boy with her heels. But the chestnut needed no urging. He

knew the game—a game as natural to him and the cattle as wrestling is to kittens and "I spy" to the children of men. He and his mistress were one in their delight in any kind of race. His swinging gallop loosened out until he ran like a dog. The whole dashing company vanished from the sight of the three men around a bend in the valley, amid a spattering of the sand and pebbles and a fine splashing of shallow water.

"There she goes, hell for leather," said Dan proudly. "She could ride a moose, or a jumpin' deer, she could."

"Break 'er neck one day," said Sol Gabe. He looked into the bag which the girl had left in his hands. "Bin eatin' gingerbread, was she? Yep —et it all!"

The men boiled the kettle, made tea, and ate the custard pie and buttered biscuits, the hard-boiled eggs, molasses cookies, and Washington pie which Mrs. Mitchell had prepared for them and Ellen May had brought. It was two o'clock when they overtook the cattle, bunched near a narrow gap in the right bank, and held in check by the girl and Red Boy.

"The bars are down," called the girl. "Send them along. All's clear."

They got the little herd on the move, rounded them into the gap, and followed them up into a fenced lane; and then Mr. Smith got his first view of this wilderness farm, and seemed considerably astonished. A long clearing ran parallel with the river for about half a mile, screened from it by a dense, towering wall spared from the original forest. The clearing was not more than a couple of hundred yards deep, and along its back stood the high forest like the face of a cliff.

Most of this cleared land had been stumped and ploughed, though grey and fire-marked stumps still occupied a few acres like a halted and daunted army. Here was a wide square of red buckwheat stubble, there a wider square of yellow oat stubble, there green and grown levels of shorn meadow. Fair in the middle of the clearing, facing the river, stood a big house of logs with four log barns and a fenced yard on its right flank. A veranda ran along the front of the house from end to end. There was a narrow garden patch in front of the veranda, fenced in with grey pickets in which sunflowers hung their heavy, ripened heads. Four cows and three horses were to be seen in one far corner of the clearing, half a dozen cows with calves at their heels in another corner, and two colts looked over the barnyard rails. It was not the sort of establishment that Mr. Smith had expected to find in this wilderness between fifty and sixty miles from the mouth of Rocky River.

The cattle scattered over the clearing, and the men went on up to the house. Ellen May came galloping after them, overtaking them at the steps of the veranda. Mrs. Mitchell met them at the threshold. She was a large woman, with boldly cut features, a weather-roughened complexion, and steady grey eyes. Though she held a large spoon in her right hand, that hand looked to be quite as capable to hold the haft of an axe or the tail of a plough. She did not start or change colour at sight of the stranger, though strangers were rare things in her life, Heaven knows; but her eyes flashed an inquiry. Dan stepped up to her, and, with a hand on her shoulder, whispered a few words in her ear.

"You're welcome to what we have, and I am sorry you have been injured," she said, turning a thoughtful but unsmiling face to Smith.

The stranger bowed his thanks. He saw in the woman a stronger character than in the husband. He had not expected to find a woman like this. She was unusual in the very fact that she seemed to be so thoroughly in keeping with, and fitted for, her life and surroundings Though she looked very much the woman, with her deep breast and broad hips, she suggested the woodsman rather than the woodsman's wife, the farmer rather than the farmer's house-drudge. He saw that she was a power in herself, and this fact interested him more than the fact that she spoke correctly. He did not know the province—rustic, rural, or urban—well enough to wonder at the correctness of her language. It would scarcely have interested him to know that she was the daughter of a shiftless but educated settler on the big river, had been mistress of a country school until her marriage, and had thanked Heaven for the chance of exchanging the narrow, meaningless existence of the little school and the petty village for the life of a pioneer settler on Rocky River.

Dan had been on the land only two years before his marriage, had built the house and cleared a few acres. The young couple had ridden a pair of farm horses from the mouth of Rocky River up to their home in June, with bags of provisions and the bride's wedding gifts lashed in front and behind their saddles. The river had been high that June, and in places they had been forced to swim behind their horses, in others to scramble ashore and ride point-blank through the pathless under-brush. But that desperate journey had filled

the bride with joy. That was the kind of person she was; and when she slid from her dripping horse after the last hard stage of the third day, and stood in the little clearing, amid the fire-scarred stumps, and looked at the crowding forest, the spirit of conquest leaped in her grey eyes like a flame.

The stranger and Sol Gabe were left alone on the veranda, for the man and woman had entered the house together, and Ellen May had cantered off to the barns to stable the gelding. Smith sat in a home-made armchair, and gazed out at the peaceful scene for a minute or two. He had never imagined a place of such vast and brooding peace as this. At last he sighed and turned toward Sol Gabe, who sat on the step. He drew a packet from an inside pocket of his coat—a packet wrapped in oiled silk and tied with twine—and began to unfasten it, awkwardly enough with his left hand. The packet contained American bank bills of formidable denominations. He stripped off a couple of "twenties" from the top of the wad, and held them out to Sol Gabe. Sol eyed them curiously, intently, even hungrily, but made no movement to take them. He shook his head, still gazing at the beautifully engraved paper.

"Nope," he said. "Don't want 'im. No good to me. Don't need 'im."

But Smith was not to be put off so easily. He waved the bills in the air, held them beneath the Maliseet's eyes, pressed them against one of those inert brown hands. Sol Gabe smiled doubtfully, touched the crisp paper with a finger-tip, and again shook his head.

"Nope," he said again. "No good to me, 'cept

get drunk way down on Saunder's Mill. Don't need 'im in here, anyhow. Got plenty."

Smith continued to urge the money on him with smile and gesture. Sol Gabe became fretful. His black eyes flashed. He struck the proffered bills lightly but sharply with the edge of his hand and scowled.

"Don't want 'im," he said. "Ain't safe, maybe—how do I know? How you get 'im, anyway? Police come here maybe, an' see that money on me, and tak' me downriver. Blood on 'im, maybe. You keep 'im, anyhow."

The big stranger's eyes glinted dangerously. He glared at Sol Gabe for a second or two, then returned all the money to his pocket, arose from his seat, and walked off to the far end of the veranda.

The Indian wagged his head, and went off to the stables in search of Ellen May. He had known Ellen May since she was a baby, and had a great deal to tell her. He was not sure that Dan would tell everything that he knew, so he felt it to be his immediate duty to make a clean breast of everything before Dan should chance to meet him and ask him to keep quiet. He found the girl in Red Boy's stall, and told her about the finding of Smith, the discovery of traces of the visitors farther downstream, and the dead man in the bushes. Ellen May listened very quietly. She did not get excited, or look particularly shocked, though she knew nothing of the death of humans and nothing of human crime.

"I don't like his face," she said, "but I am sorry for him. The men who cut off his tongue and hand must have hated him very much; but if the

man he shot was the person who did the cutting, I think he did right to kill him. But why did they bring him away up Rocky River, I wonder? Perhaps they were afraid to kill him, but hoped that he would die before anybody found him; and perhaps they had a reason for thinking that he would not go back to the cities and tell what they had done to him even if he could. But I wonder why one of them stayed behind, and how long he intended to stay?"

She gazed at Sol Gabe thoughtfully, with shadowed eyes and puckered brows. Sol tried to look as if he were following a deep train of reasoning, with fair prospects of getting to the end of it, and wagged his head knowingly. But, to tell the truth, he was all befogged. The girl had gone too far for him, with her perhapses here and perhapses there.

"Maybe," he muttered, wagging his head sagely. "Bad man, anyhow."

"Yes, I think he is a bad man," replied the girl, "though I have read that even good men have bitter enemies out in the big world. But this man's eyes are bad. I don't like to look at them. Do you, Sol Gabe?"

"Nope," said Sol. "Make me feel kinder scart. Too round. Too thick."

"But I suppose he'll have to live with us until something happens."

"Yep, till somethin' happens—till the police come an' fetch 'im off to jail, maybe. He try to gimme some money, but I don't take it."

"Yes, it would have been a mistake to take the money, I think. I think he took that money from the man he shot; but I think that it was his money in the first place. Oh, I have plenty of ideas jump-

ing into my head about it all, but they get mixed up before I can see them very clearly. I have an idea that the police may come up this river to look for the man Mr. Smith killed, and then if they found any of that money on you or father they would think that you two had killed him, and maybe Smith would just point at his mouth and his hand and make them believe that you and father had cut off his hand and tongue, too. He could do that, you know; and he looks bad enough for anything."

"You think too darn much, Ellen May," said Sol Gabe. "Maybe you better quit thinkin' now, an' come to the house, or maybe you get us all hung by the neck."

They went over to the house, and found Dan and Mrs. Mitchell talking earnestly in the outer kitchen. Dan had made a clean breast of everything to his wife, and then he had gone to the veranda, and Smith had offered him the greater part of the packet of money—a collection of bills amounting to close upon two thousand dollars. This had frightened the honest Dan, and sent him back to his wife with the story, and she had begged him not to accept the money. She had felt a fear and distaste for the stranger's money—vague, but strong. She had not imagined the danger as clearly as had Ellen May, but she had felt it as surely. So Dan had gone back to Smith, and informed him that he was welcome to food and lodging, but that his money was not wanted. The stranger had protested, but Dan had remained firm. And now they were conjecturing and wondering, puzzled and afraid, conscious of a menace to their peace, but unable to give it a form or a name in their minds.

CHAPTER IV

THE LONG WINTER

Mrs. Mitchell had always made a point of keeping a well-stocked medicine chest and box of surgical dressings on hand, and had read enough of medicine and surgery to be decidedly useful in the treatment of simple maladies, simple cuts, and even fractured limbs. Having seen the need of this outfit and this accomplishment, she had gone ahead and acquired them both, with the outlay of a little money and more time and study. During her life on Rocky River she had successfully treated many infantile illnesses, several serious colds and fevers, several cuts and fractures. But all these cases had been in her own family. Now she eyed Mr. Smith's bandaged arm with interest, and on the morning of the day after his arrival she suggested that the wrist had better be redressed.

Smith looked doubtful. He evidently mistrusted her skill and materials, and thought it better to leave well enough alone. She brought the box, however, and showed him the sealed packets of surgical gauze and linen. That changed his opinion, and he nodded his assent. The arm felt comfortable enough, but if it would amuse her to examine it and rebandage it, and as she seemed to know what she was about, he was willing to let her do it. He was anxious to be agreeable. So Mrs. Mitchell brought a basin of boiled water, and set to work

unwinding the bandage. Her big hands were wonderfully deft and light. The bandage was very long, and beneath the first one was another. The arm was bandaged elaborately to the very elbow.

"It is easy to see that a real doctor did this," she remarked; "but I am sure there was no need of so many bandages."

A slip of paper escaped from a fold of the strip of linen and fluttered to the floor. Ellen May, who was watching her mother, picked up the paper. Two lines were written in ink on one side of it. The girl read them aloud in an awe-stricken voice:

"If thy tongue offend thee, pluck it out. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off."

"That's not Scripture," said Mrs. Mitchell, in a matter-of-fact voice. "I hate to hear anything misquoted, especially the Bible. And it does not apply. It is not even common sense in this case. Did the person who wrote that expect us to believe that this man amputated his own hand and tongue? Nonsense! He wouldn't have the nerve—no matter how much they had offended him—and he wouldn't have skill enough even to wind these bandages with his left hand. The man who wrote that was a fool, and he evidently expected a fool to read it."

Smith's face was grey, and twisted with hate, or memories of hate.

"But here is something else," said Mrs. Mitchell quietly. She had the arm bare by this time, had taken a hasty glance at the wrist, and was now gazing at something on the forearm. She had seen that the wrist was healing cleanly. "Some one has tattooed you, I see. The same doctor, I suppose? It is very neatly done."

The stranger started in his chair, and stared down at his arm. Ellen May stepped forward to look. What they saw were the following damning words pricked deep into the skin in black and red:

"So perish all right hands that have robbed the widows and the fatherless. So perish all false tongues. I am a thief and a liar."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the woman.

Ellen May stepped back with a little cry of horror. The man himself made no sound, though his lips moved. He trembled in the chair, then sat limp, glaring down at the red and black words on his arm, so neatly and durably printed, with hell in his round eyes. Mrs. Mitchell was the first of the three to recover her composure. She turned to the box of dressings, opened a jar of surgical gauze, and cut off what she required. She placed the gauze neatly over the stump of the wrist, and took up a fresh roll of bandages with her left hand. She worked quickly.

"Well, you are certainly marked," she said. "You'll never be able to sail under false colours in the future, for your own are nailed to the mast, so to speak." She looked up into his terrible face for a moment steadily, curiously, with scorn and wonder in her eyes. "And it is written in your eyes and on your mouth as plainly as on your arm," she added calmly.

"Don't say so!" exclaimed Ellen May. "He suffers enough surely. Who are we to taunt him, or judge him? We know nothing except that he shot the man who maimed him. And he is our guest, mother."

Smith glanced swiftly at the girl with a glimmer

as of gratitude in his opaque orbs. Mrs. Mitchell continued, and completed the task of bandaging the arm in silence. Then she and Ellen May gathered up the equipment, and left the stranger to his own torturing reflections.

The work of the big wilderness farm went on in peace in spite of the menace in the air that was felt by all. Sol Gabe remained for ten days, for there was much still to be done in preparation for the long winter. Two pigs had to be killed, and that was a job which neither Ellen May nor her heroic mother would ever lend a hand at. Wood that had been hauled and sawn the previous winter had to be split and piled in the shed. The turnips had to be pulled and stored away in the root cellar. There was plenty to do, and even the crippled stranger did his best to help the work along. He was always ready to take his turn at the big churn, which was worked by foot power, twice a week. He helped Ellen May lay a new floor in one of the stables. He was always up as early as the others, ready, even eager, to volunteer his services.

"I'll say this much for him—there ain't a lazy bone in his body," said Dan. "An' I do think he's tryin' to make the best of things, for when he wants to sulk he goes off an' does it by himself."

"He's energetic enough," replied Mrs. Mitchell. "He has been too energetic in his day. There's truth in every line and dot of those words on his arm. Oh, he is a bad man, and I think he'd have been hung by the neck long ago if he'd got his deserts. I only hope this charity of ours will not get us into trouble. Do you notice how reserved

he is about his past? He does not even try to lie to us about it."

"How could he lie about anything without a tongue?" asked Dan.

"He can write," said the woman. "He asked me a number of questions yesterday, printing them very well with his left hand I leave a pencil and paper in his room, always ready for him, but he has not yet taken advantage of them except to ask questions. When it comes to answering questions, he just smiles and pretends that he cannot hold the pencil."

"I thought we'd hear somethin' about him afore this," said Dan. "I sure expected the police up from the big river lookin' for the feller who went an' got himself shot. Well, if any police comes I'll tell all I know. It's our duty to house an' feed this man, but I don't like him. He's got a bad eye, an' no mistake."

"I wonder if we have done wisely?" said Mrs. Mitchell. "I'm afraid we shall find ourselves in a very awkward position when the police do come. They will wonder why you did not report the shooting of the other man. I think that was our duty, Dan. It will look queer."

"I ain't with ye there, Eliza," said Dan. "If that feller was the skunk who cut off Smith's hand an' tongue, then I say Smith had a good right to shoot him, whatever the other man done it for. That's how it looks to me—an' I'll tell the police so if they want to know."

"Perhaps it would be just as well to say nothing about the man who was shot," returned the woman. "Nobody saw him but you and Sol Gabe and Smith—and they'll keep quiet about it. If the police come

here I think they'll have enough against Smith without adding murder to it, and mixing you and Gabe up in it."

"I'm quite sure the police won't come here to look for Mr. Smith or for the dead man," said Ellen May, who had listened to the conversation up to this point without a word.

Her parents turned to her in no little astonishment. In spite of her size, her eighteen years, and her mastery of horses, she was still nothing but a child to them—a smart child, 'tis true, but a child. What on earth did she know about the police?

"Why do you think that, Ellen May?" queried her mother.

"I'm not quite sure why I think it, but I have been reasoning it out in my own mind," replied the girl, blushing a little. "My reasoning is not very clear yet, even to myself, so I can't explain it; but it seems to me that neither Mr. Smith nor his enemies would look to the police for help. Mr. Smith certainly wouldn't."

"I believe there's something in that," said Mrs. Mitchell.

"I sure hope there is," said Dan. "I ain't lookin' for trouble."

"Mr. Smith says that he used to own twenty race-horses," remarked the girl, drawing a slip of paper from her pocket and showing them the crookedly printed statement. "I asked him what had become of them, and he just turned and glared off towards the south."

The frost hit hard every night, though the days were bland. The brown and brighter leaves fell from the birches and maples and alders, thinning the underbrush of the forest so that the running partridges could be seen far in from the trails. Ellen

May went partridge shooting very often. One morning they awoke to find a cold, grey rain driving across the clearing. It rained for two days and a night, and the river grew and growled in its rocky bed. The wind crawled into the north one day. Ice sheeted the brown river; then snow came circling down from a sky as grey as a blanket. The last of the blackbirds had mustered and gone south, and the smoke-grey moose birds flitted about the house and barns on noiseless wings. Winter had come.

Sol Gabe went downstream to his cabin on Dead Wolf Brook. Sol did a little at trapping during the winter, and a little at helping Dan Mitchell in the spring and autumn; but he had a weakness. His weakness was the only deplorable thing about him or his life. It led him away from his wilderness, down to the sawmill village at the mouth of the river three or four times every year. It led him straight to Jim Sly's place, pulled his available funds out of his pocket, and filled his skin with cheap corn whisky. It was a strong weakness, but once Sol was too drunk to see or hear the weakness went out of working order—until the next time. After recovering his sight and hearing Sol would return to the woods with his satiated weakness, and get busy again with whatever pleasant woodland job claimed his immediate attention. It was this weakness that kept him from remaining with the Mitchells for the whole year. He did not want to make things any harder than they were for his little weakness.

Upon reaching home this time, Sol Gabe grunted pleasantly, even affectionately, at his squaw and two children, ate a huge meal, smoked his pipe, and refrained from telling any of the amazing things he had seen. Then he busied himself for a week

in setting out his string of traps. His weakness began to clamour soon after he had taken three foxes and a couple of mink from his traps; so he set out in good order for the village at the mouth of the river. Arriving there, he kept away from Jim Sly's place for a whole day, with eyes and ears alert for any word or sign of the police, and for any whisper of curiosity concerning anything that had taken place on the headwaters. No sign or whisper rewarded him, however. So he called on Jim Sly, quenched his weakness, purchased a red blanket and some provisions upon recovery, and set out on his homeward journey. He reached home in good order, gave the red blanket to his wife, and settled down to the peaceful life of tending traps, cutting firewood, smoking, and dozing beside the sheet-iron stove. Though he sometimes talked to his squaw, he never said a word about the queer and terrible things he had seen upriver.

Up at Dan Mitchell's place things went along comfortably and quietly Now river and clearing were deep with snow, and white drifts sloped halfway up to the eaves of the house and low barns. The four dwellers in the farmstead cut paths and clefts in these drifts, and the horned cattle and horses trampled the snow in the barnyards. By this time the Mitchells had grown accustomed to Mr. Smith. They treated him almost like one of the family. In spite of the dark things they suspected him of, they gave him kindness. They respected his heroic efforts at being cheerful and of little trouble. He did not often show them his black moods, but they sometimes heard him pacing his floor during the night for hours at a time.

Mrs. Mitchell had a set of chessmen, and had

taught the game to Dan and Ellen May. And she had an old English book concerning the history and rules of the game which had belonged to her scholarly but shiftless father. Smith watched the others play a number of games, signing to them that he had never played it. Then he got hold of the book, studied it through several long evenings, and took it to bed with him several nights. The game took hold of him. One evening he set out the pieces on the little table, and beckoned to Dan.

Dan was the weakest player of the three, but full of all sorts of shrewd tricks. He was short on following the trend of his opponent's play, however. There lay his weakness. Dan took his seat with a confident smile. Mrs. Mitchell and Ellen May drew up their chairs to watch the game. After making his fifth move Smith leaned back in his chair with a smile on his face. Dan stared at the board. Ellen May laughed.

"You are checkmated, father," she said. "Mr. Smith has read the book to some purpose. Oh, you needn't look. There's no way out of it."

"Darn my hide, but that was slick!" exclaimed Dan. "Say, Eliza, take my place. I'll bet a dollar to a potato he beats you, too."

"I think not," replied Mrs. Mitchell, taking her husband's chair eagerly. "I saw what he was doing when he made his second play. He simply played one of the games from the book, and if you had advanced your king's knight you would have spoiled his game."

Smith nodded and smiled. The pieces were set up again. Smith gave the advantage of first move to Mrs. Mitchell, and filled and lighted his pipe. He was smoking Dan's tobacco now in a clay pipe.

He did not seem to mind it. They moved slowly. After ten minutes of play the woman began to look puzzled. She studied the board a long while before her next move. After making it she looked pleased.

"I think that spoils your little plan," she said. "I saw it in time."

Mr. Smith bowed politely, gazed at the board for six seconds, then plucked up a knight with his left hand, and set it down elsewhere.

"Checkmate!" cried Ellen May, with a trill of laughter.

And so it was. The stranger had grasped the game in three evenings of watching and reading as Dan and his wife had not grasped it in years of play. Mrs. Mitchell was disgusted. She was not willing to admit that Smith could beat her. So they had another game, and with the same result. Then Ellen took her place, and won from Smith after an hour's hard play. The stranger seemed pleased. He got a pencil and paper from the other table, and wrote the following, which he handed to Mrs. Mitchell:

"Your daughter has a fine imagination. I have a clever daughter, too—and a clever son."

The woman's heart softened to him at sight of these words as it never had before. Tears tingled suddenly in her steady eyes.

"Where are they now?" she asked. "And what do they think has become of you?"

"They are in New York, I suppose, and think that I have run away," he wrote slowly Then he turned and walked quickly from the room. They heard the furtive tread of his stockinged feet on the floor until after midnight.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW SETTLERS

SMITH did not refer to his son and daughter again during the long winter, and he absolutely refused to answer any questions about his past. He seemed content to live on as he was living now, shut in with the Mitchells, helping with the work of house and stables, wandering in the snowy forest, reading and playing chess. Though the expression of his eyes was still unpleasant, he made a pleasant companion of himself. The Mitchells almost forgot that his tongue was gone, so apt did he become with a simple sign language of his own and with his pencil and paper. His manner towards Ellen May became that of a reserved but affectionate uncle, and with Dan and Eliza a real glow of good-fellowship often showed through his studied politeness. But for his eyes, the sinister mystery of his past, and the damning inscriptions on his right arm, he would have been accepted by the three as a very close friend. Even as it was, they sometimes thought of him as a friend.

Ellen May's feelings toward the stranger were more clearly defined than her parents' before the winter was over. She felt sorry for him; she disliked his eyes; she respected his brain; she liked his manners—and she entertained no fear of him. She felt sure that she knew him. She believed that all that was written on his arm was true of his

past, and yet she believed that he would be firm in friendship as in hate. She thought that he would have very few friends and many enemies. She could see that he suffered no remorse for having shot the man on the river. Thus she studied him, building his character in her mind from this and that, and she came very close to the truth of it. A hard, unscrupulous man, violent when opposed, bitter in hatred, greedy and cruel against the world with which he had warred, yet gentle in private life, and touched by small kindnesses—this is how she read him And she saw that he possessed courage and a wonderful command over his emotions. Her parents did not see the man so clearly, and were afraid of him in their secret hearts —or perhaps it was only of his past that they were afraid.

In February, Dan cut and hauled out a dozen or more fine spruces and pines, squared some of them with his broad-axe, and built a narrow raft with them down on the frozen breast of the stream. He had done this same thing every February for years Sol Gabe always appeared some time in April before the running of the ice; the scow-like raft was freighted with beef, pork, and five or six hundredweight of butter, and the two hardy woodsmen ran it down with the ice to the village sixty miles below. There the produce of stall and dairy was sold to the storekeeper, and the raft of big timbers to the mill-owner.

And now Dan got his raft built for this year's voyage. Mrs. Mitchell helped at the chopping, for she could swing an axe as well as a man, and delighted in the exercise. Ellen May drove the team in hauling the logs down to the ice. The raft was fastened

together with ropes and wooden pins, and was built high in the sides. The model was of Dan's own invention, and was strong enough to run through any rapid between the farm and the mouth of the river at high water. It could not sink, it could not turn turtle; the worst that the swollen waters could do to it was to work a few of the logs loose or knock off some bark.

The raft was ready by the last of February. March passed uneventfully. Warm days, followed by warm, heavy rains, came in April, bringing Sol Gabe with them. The river swelled beneath the ice; the ice broke away from the banks, and began to crumble and swing. The raft was moored securely and loaded, and then Dan Mitchell was faced by the question of what to do with Mr. Smith, for Smith did not want to go down to the village at the mouth of the river.

"I am an elderly man," wrote Smith, "and not fit for the long walk back through the slush and mud. I'll stay right here and help look after the ladies."

That was exactly what Dan and Eliza did not want, for in their hearts they were afraid of the stranger. Sol Gabe said nothing one way or the other. Ellen May thought it over, then told her parents that she thought Smith might safely be permitted to remain.

"Even if he should wish to do us any harm, we are two to one," she said. "We are strong enough to protect ourselves and each other; but I am sure that he means honestly by us. He looks upon us as his friends. You can safely go away without worrying about us, father."

At last she convinced her parents of the stranger's

honesty of purpose in this case, and early one morning the scow-like raft was unmoored and let run with the sodden ice. Dan manned the stern with a long sweep, and Sol Gabe the bow with a pole.

On the morning of the day after Dan's departure with Sol Gabe, Ellen May told Smith of her intention of setting to work immediately at the customary springtime manufacture of maple sugar and syrup for the family. She asked Smith to help her. Together they collected the utensils necessary and carried them to a grove of straight-boled sugar-maples a few hundred yards from the house. In their first day's work they "tapped" about one hundred of the trees—bored holes in the grey rind and moist, yellow wood, placed the "spiles" to guide the oozing sap and stood a vessel of some sort beneath each spile. They gathered the sap into a hogshead before sundown, and again in the morning; and, later in the day, they added to their labours by commencing to boil the sap in a huge, three-legged iron pot over a fire at the edge of the grove. They tapped more trees. The nights were frosty, but the days were bright and warm. It was ideal "sugaring" weather. The work was hard; but Ellen May enjoyed it, and Smith appeared to take a keen interest in the results of every boiling. He toiled through the sodden snow with loads of sap, split and carried fuel for the fire, and took his turn at attending to the boiling pot willingly if not gleefully. The expression of his big face lightened.

So, in the big clearing, more than a week passed without accident. Smith and Ellen May became friends, and Mrs. Mitchell began to lose something of her distrust of the silent stranger. As for Smith,

he knew moments, even hours, of peace. Physical fatigue brought him sleep that held through the long nights. In addition to his work in the maple grove, he continued to help with the work of house and stable, to make his own bed, and play chess as he had done these things when Dan was at home. He was a great deal quieter than Dan about the house, and evidently just as harmless. And so a week passed.

One night, early in the second week, however, something awakened Mrs. Mitchell suddenly—a sound that had faded from her ears before her eyes were open. She sat up in bed and listened, scarcely breathing. A loud thump as of blunt iron or wood broke the silence. She put out her hand and grasped Ellen May's shoulder. The girl sat up and struck a match. It was two o'clock in the morning.

"There's somebody at the door," whispered Mrs. Mitchell. "Light a candle. Where is your pistol? We must go down. There! He has hit the kitchen door again. Who can it be, I wonder?"

As the women drew on their dressing-gowns of heavy blanketing they heard Smith moving about in his room. The plank door resounded with the thump of the axe, and a husky voice shouted for immediate admittance. The voice came up to them muffled, but menacing, and thick with oaths. The women left their room, and started down the stairs, Mrs. Mitchell with the candle and Ellen May with the revolver. They were half-way down when Smith appeared at the top, candle in hand He motioned for them to stop. They obeyed him, for even Eliza's nerves were shaken.

He descended, passing them with a bow and a smile. They followed him along the narrow hall,

through the sitting-room, and into the wide kitchen. As the door came into their view, in the feeble light of the candle carried by Smith, the stout planks leaped and boomed again beneath the stroke of the axe. The kitchen door opened into the wood-shed, and the door of the shed had not been fastened. Smith strode forward, set his candle down on a chair, then rapped with his knuckles on the still quivering door.

"So yer there, are ye?" cried the husky voice of the unseen. "Then lemme in, damn ye, an' be quick about it, or there'll be trouble."

It was quite evident from the huskiness of the voice that the owner of it was very drunk—fighting drunk. Smith returned to Ellen May, and took the revolver from her hand. He went back to the door, turned the key, shot back the heavy bolt of iron, and swung it open. A big man with an axe in his hands stood just beyond the threshold in the dark shed. The candles, flickering in the slight draft of chill air, cast wavering half-lights and shadows upon him. Smith stood in a better illumination, outlined clearly to the visitor's view. He looked unnaturally tall and bulky, with a grey blanket draped about him. A glimmer from the candle on the chair lit his big face and his unpleasant eyes. He gazed at the untimely visitor in silence.

"Holy saints defend us!" exclaimed the stranger, in drunken astonishment and fear. "Why d'ye eye me thataway? Good evenin' to ye, damn ye! Speak, can't ye? All I want is a place with a roof to it to lay down an' rest a spell in."

Smith and the women understood that the visitor's oaths were now employed only in an effort to bolster

up his failing courage. Smith grinned sardonically, and stepped aside, making a motion with his left hand, in which the revolver gleamed, for the other to enter.

"Come in," said Mrs. Mitchell. "You are welcome to a night's shelter, whoever you are, and wherever you come from. You'll oblige me by leaving the axe in the shed—and that rifle, too."

The stranger stood the axe beside the cased rifle against the outer casing of the door, and stepped cautiously and sheepishly into the kitchen. He kept his eyes on Smith, and Smith returned the compliment.

"I see you've got your sleeping bag with you, so you can just make yourself as comfortable as you can on the floor here," said Eliza, who was feeling quite herself again. "If you hadn't tried to smash down the door with your axe, I'd have given you a decent bed to sleep in."

The visitor was a tall, lanky, tough-looking person, with a long, black moustache, very ragged at the ends, and a swarthy skin. He glanced at the women, then back at Smith.

"Why don't he say somethin'?" he whispered. "What the devil's the matter with him? Guess I'd best git out an' bunk in the woods."

"I guess not," retorted Mrs. Mitchell sharply. "You're the worse for liquor, and I don't like your face nor your manners. You'll stop right where we can keep an eye on you."

And so he did; and it was Smith who spent the remainder of the dark hours in the kitchen keeping an eye on him. The fellow said that he was a trapper, had come into this country from the other side of the height of land, and that his name was

Pierre McAvity. Then he went to sleep on the floor, and Smith sat up on guard duty until dawn, with a candle and a revolver at his elbow, and "Green's History of the English People" in his left hand. Pierre McAvity's personal appearance and manner of asking admittance had not inspired confidence in the hearts of Smith and the women. He went away in the morning, after a good breakfast, with no very clear statement of his business or intentions.

Dan Mitchell and Sol Gabe returned after an absence of twelve days with a bateau loaded deep with "store stuff"—flour, sugar, salt, oil, boots and shoes, woollen and cotton cloth, seeds, and odds and ends of gear. The voyage upstream had been hard and slow, for they had been forced to tow the heavy boat much of the way against the swollen river with the lines over their shoulders and water to their waists. Dan had been anxious, and he let a sigh of relief escape him as his keen eyes showed him, at a comprehensive glance, that all was well. Smith understood the eager grasp of the woodsman's hand, flushed darkly, and smiled somewhat bitterly. When Dan was told of the visit from the strange trapper, Pierre McAvity, he thanked his guest for the way he had intimidated the fellow with his eyes and pistol and sent him so promptly about his business. But he did not consider the visit from the trapper a matter of any importance.

Sol Gabe remained with the Mitchells until the middle of June. He helped with the ploughing, fencing, clearing, and burning of "new land," and the sowing of seed. It was a busy season for all of them. No limbs of the law appeared; every

one was cheerful; Dan and Eliza felt secure. Smith worked as well as could be expected of any man with only a left hand. His body grew thinner and harder, his face thinner and less unpleasant in expression. After a long day of work he was always willing to go with Ellen May for an hour's trout fishing. In rainy weather, when work was slack, he wrote short accounts of things and people and adventures he had met with in London, New York, Paris, and other great cities of the world for the amusement of the family. He did his best to be both pleasant and useful; but still in the night watches he often paced the floor of his room for hours in an agony of hatred and anxiety.

Sol Gabe set out for his shack, his squaw, and his children on June 18, with part of his wages in his pocket in the form of money, and part on his back in the form of tea and tobacco and home-cured bacon. He set out early in the morning, and, to every one's astonishment, he was back at the farm before noon. He explained his return by telling them that strangers had made a clearing and built a house three miles downstream. He had called on them, of course, and had a talk and a look round. The new settlers consisted of six persons —a family of the name of McAvity and a young man called Ned Limerick.

This Pierre McAvity was the same man who had visited the Mitchells in April—a tall, lanky, black-faced fellow. He had his wife and two sons and a daughter with him. The daughter was a young woman of twenty or thereabouts, and the sons were well-grown lads of about eighteen and fifteen. Limerick was a boarder who had joined them for the sake of his health—so they had told Sol Gabe. But

Sol said that Mr. Limerick did not look like a sick man.

"Darn them!" exclaimed Dan. "What the devil brought 'em here? I don't like to be crowded. Couldn't they settle twenty miles farther down?"

Smith, who had listened to Sol Gabe with every sign of the most lively interest, now wrote on a slip of paper: "What does Limerick look like? What does he talk like?"

The Maliseet replied that McAvity's boarder didn't look like a woodsman or a riverman in spite of his home-spun trousers and flannel shirt. He looked like a city "sport"—and talked like one.

Smith's eyes glittered, and his heavy jaws set hard He crushed the slip of paper in his hand, turned, and walked away. Sol Gabe made a second start for home an hour later. Smith retired to his room that night several hours before his usual time. It was a heavy night, and the others soon followed his example. It was about nine o'clock when the kitchen door was opened very softly from the inside, and closed very softly from the outside. With Ellen May's revolver in his pocket, and his boots in his hand, Mr. Smith moved around the end of the shed, across the sprouting grain and young grass of the clearing, and down to the edge of the river. There he halted and put on his boots. A perfect fury of hate smoked in his heart and brain.

The night was lit by stars glowing against a sky as heavy as a purple curtain. The valley of the whispering, sobbing stream was in grave-black shadow The air was still and hot and sweet with the breath of the black forest and carpets of young ferns. Beetles and smaller insects boomed and hummed, and a whippoorwill sent his full-toned,

liquid cry of desolation volleying from his lonely retreat. Smith lighted his pipe, rather to keep the mosquitoes away from his face than because he wanted to smoke, then started downstream. Sometimes he stumbled slightly, striking a toe against an unseen root or stone, and sometimes he stepped knee-deep into the river. He advanced at a good pace, however. At last he came to the new clearing, knowing it first by the break in the black curtain of spruces along the top of the bank, and again by the sounds of a tethered cow cropping among the new stumps. A pleasant scent of fresh chips and sawdust came to him. He halted for a few minutes, breathing heavily, and wiping the mosquitoes from his wet face, then made his way silently up the bank. He wondered if these people had a dog. It was not likely, or Sol Gabe would have mentioned the fact.

The log house was close to the top of the bank. One small window was illuminated. Smith advanced upon this window with infinite caution. It was within five feet of the ground, and without a sash. A square of mosquito netting was tacked across it. Smith reached the wall without a sound, though the thumping of his heart sounded in his own ears like the beating of a drum. He raised himself slowly from his crouched position and looked through the window. What he saw was the interior of a very small room, occupied by one person, and furnished with an empty biscuit box and a camp cot. The box stood on its end beside the head of the cot, with a lighted lantern upon it. The occupant of the room lay on the cot, reading a paper-backed book and smoking a cigarette. He was a young man, with an earnest, clean-shaven, engaging

face. It was not the sort of face one forgets even after a single meeting. At the sight of it the blood rushed through Smith's arteries like liquid fire, and for a moment a purple mist obscured his vision.

His eyes cleared. He raised his hand, moved back a step from the window, and brought the blunt sight of the revolver in line with the young man's unconscious head. The muzzle of the weapon touched the thin mosquito netting.

CHAPTER VI

THE McAVITYS' BOARDER

THE strong forefinger of Smith's left hand crooked on the trigger. His left arm was as steady as wood. The sight of his black, opaque eyes was clear as glass. Another of his enemies lay at his mercy.

Then his mind—or was it his heart?—played him a trick. A thought of Ellen May flashed into his brain, and next moment, with his eyes on the face of the young man on the cot, he seemed to see the face of his own son.

Thought is the swiftest thing in God's universe. It is as much swifter than light as light is swifter than sound. Time and space have nothing to do with its action. All the memories of a life, the knowledge of past ages, surmises, and hopes of the future—all the kingdoms of the earth, the fear of God, the science of the stars—all are here in the little cup of bone, to flash a picture, or a million pictures, on the instant.

Smith saw the face of his son, then the face of his daughter, then the face of the man he had shot on that autumn day across the shrunken river. And pictures came to him of a time, long ago, when he had been clean even of craft. Again he nursed his infant son through a night of fever, sat with his wife's hand in his, in a poor room above the noises of a poor street, planning their future; felt the intoxication of his first success; saw the

angry face of the first man whom he had "done" in a deal; he saw city crowds and great houses; he saw Dan Mitchell and Ellen May playing chess. Then the thought came to him that a human life is a terrible thing—too terrible to make, too terrible to mar, almost too terrible to live.

He lowered the muzzle of the revolver from the window. It had been held against the thin netting for exactly twenty seconds.

The young man on the cot turned a page without lifting his eyes. The thin reek of his cigarette crawled up toward the low ceiling of poles. He flipped the ash of the tobacco to the floor, and went peacefully and steadily on with his reading.

Smith slipped the revolver into his pocket, and turned away from the window. His mind was almost a blank now, gripped by many mixed and nameless emotions. He descended the bank to the edge of the stream. He waded knee-deep into the black, cold water, and the pressure on brain and heart became easier, and he was conscious of a vague feeling that he had done well in refraining from pulling the trigger. He had done something praiseworthy—something unusual, at least. He had refrained from obeying an impulse of hate. Why he had refrained he did not know.

He stood in the black water and wondered at himself. Was he growing old? Was he losing his courage? Was his heart softening? His soul jeered at that last question. He stooped low, and dipped the cool, quick water to his face with the hollowed palm of his hand. He drank. He bathed his hot face, his head, and his neck. Then he waded slowly upstream, conscious of the sweet, aromatic breath of the sweating forest, but unconscious of the sting-

ing flies. His mind grew clear and active, not with flashing pictures, but with reasonable thought.

The young man back there at McAvity's, who called himself Limerick, was one of his enemies, or at least in league with his enemies. He was one of the three who had brought Smith upriver. He was the one who had been left behind with the canoe, not one of the two who had led and carried Smith up to the spot where Dan Mitchell had found him. This young man at McAvity's had not actually taken part in the dastardly surgical operation. In fact, he had not been within fifteen miles of Smith at the time. All this went through Smith's mind. He considered it calmly. The fellow was one of the three who had planned this horrible revenge; had he now returned to spy upon their victim, to see that he did not escape from his living death in the wilderness? Perhaps he wanted to learn the fate of the man whom Smith had shot. Smith smiled grimly at that. They had taken the law into their own hands, and now they were afraid to call upon the law for help.

"Why didn't I shoot him?" wondered Smith, with a pleasant feeling of admiration for himself. "He was in my power—and I let him live. I am evidently a better man than I thought myself. I am learning self-denial. He is as guilty of crippling me as if he had held the knife in his own fingers, and yet I lowered the revolver and let him live."

The big, one-handed, tongueless man occupied himself with reflections of this sort all the way home. It was midnight when he got into bed. He turned over twice, then sank into a dreamless sleep.

The household was early astir, the milking was

done, and the horses and young stock were fed before breakfast. Smith was up and at work as usual, attending to the wants of the calves and young pigs. He looked more cheerful than usual. He thanked his stars every moment that he had not shot the young man at McAvity's. For the shooting of the other he felt no remorse, but something told him that it would have been otherwise in this case. At breakfast Dan voiced his displeasure toward the new settlers, and his wonder that none of them had been over to see him. He did not like to be crowded; but, on the other hand, he did not like to be slighted.

"If it's the same man who came here in April, when you were away," said Eliza, "then the less we see of them the better, for he was a hard-looking ticket—and drunk. I don't know what we should have done but for Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith seemed to scare him."

Smith smiled. He knew that the woman did not entirely approve of him and could not forget the inscriptions on his arm, but ever since that visit from Pierre McAvity she had treated him more like a man and less like a crippled sinner to be pitied and closely watched. Dan's manner toward him had never been watchful, and neither had the girl's. Of late there had sometimes been a note of respect in Eliza's voice when she spoke to him, and that was like a tonic to Smith. He liked to have this strong, clear-minded woman respect him if only for the unpleasant power of his eyes and his undoubted physical courage. The maimed man's desire for physical prowess had already developed in him.

"I wonder what the girl is like?" remarked Ellen May.

Mrs. Mitchell sniffed. "Like nothing you've ever seen, I'm sure," she said. "The man looked like a half-breed. If the girl is anything like her father she'll be the kind of young woman to leave to herself."

Again Smith smiled. He had heard women speak of other women in this same voice and spirit far away in the big world which was now lost to him, in big houses—women with soft, white hands idle in their laps. But those women had not been of as fine a type as Eliza Mitchell, he reflected, and few of them of as fine a strain of blood. It was an amusing thought. And he remembered that women had spoken that way of his wife long ago, and that many a glossy gentleman had owed his ruin to nothing else. Oh, he had squared many old scores. He had brought purse-proud houses crashing for every pang inflicted on the wife of his youth by uncharitable women. His smile grew grim as his mind went back, and he was proud of the terrible game he had played.

Down at Pierre McAvity's clearing also the day's work was well begun. Pierre and the boys were in the woods with their axes, extending the clearing. The women were in the kitchen, washing the dishes, and Mr. Limerick sat on a stump, gazing idly at the river and smoking a cigarette. His clear-cut features, brown eyes, and bright, sun-tinted complexion was pleasant to look at. His expression was gentle, indolent, and somewhat pensive. He wore a soft shirt open at the neck, old flannel trousers, and moccasins. His hands were brown, shapely, and unscarred by toil. His body was slender and well proportioned, his legs long, but not lanky.

He dropped the stump of his cigarette on the moss, rubbed it out with his foot, yawned, and sighed.

"Confound this!" he said. "I don't like it. It's not sporting."

He left the stump, and went down to the very edge of the sliding river. The river had shrunk considerably during the last three weeks, and the water had cleared to its summer tint of golden amber in the pools. Raised in a pail, or in the palm of the hand, it was as colourless as glass. The young man moved down to a pool a few yards below, and gazed into the sun-hot depths for a long time. At last he lighted another cigarette from a silver case, and moved on down the edge of the stream.

He soon came to a deeper and larger pool than that which he had just left, and here on a flat grey rock he slipped out of his scanty clothing and plunged into the water. There was not much room for swimming, but the water was cool and refreshing, and he slid cleanly about, across the pool and back again four or five times, then crawled out and lay full length on the flat rock in the wind and sun. There was a fair breeze blowing, which kept the flies and mosquitoes in the woods. Limerick lay with his hands locked beneath his head for a pillow, and gazed straight up into the flawless, pale-blue sky.

"This wouldn't be so bad," he reflected, "if it wasn't for the spying on the old man and the fact that I'd rather be somewhere else just now. It is useless, too, for the poor old swine is afraid to go back to the world, and this looking for Knoxley seems useless, too. He must have lost himself in the woods and starved. Pierre couldn't find any

trace of him. Well, I never liked Knoxley, and I'm sorry I let myself be worked into his little game. It was all Grey's doings, and now Grey is disporting himself in Europe, and I'm here doing his dirty work."

His mind worked along to a more pleasant subject. After the secret expedition up Rocky River during the previous autumn he had gone to Europe to try to forget the deed of just but primitive punishment in which he had assisted. He had tried London and Paris, and then had retired to a little country village near the River Cher. And there he had met the girl and her brother; and there he had remained until they had gone away after refusing to give him any address for the future. They had not refused his request harshly or unkindly. No, indeed; for even the brother's eyes had been dim at the time of parting.

Thoughts of this girl and her brother, and of those winter months in the little French village, now occupied the young man's mind. How far away from Rocky River and its grim association seemed those two friends and those happy months. He had gone to Pont Levoy from Blois at a whim, and had found those two at the quiet, wide-roofed hotel behind its iron gates and sanded courtyard. Their names were Alice and Henry Wharton. The friendship of the three had become an assured thing within a few days of the first meeting. The Whartons were Americans, they said; but they seldom spoke of themselves, and never of their past. It appeared that they had no relatives and very few friends, and no home. It was evident to Limerick that they had suffered some great loss or sorrow quite recently. They seemed to have no purpose in life

save that of living quietly by themselves. They mystified Ned Limerick and attracted him.

The brother and sister had been coldly reserved in their manner toward him for a day or two, but had warmed quickly at the promptings of generous hearts. And they had been very lonely. The three were together every day from morning till night. It was not until spring that Limerick had confessed his love for the girl; and that had been the end of the happy time—the signal for the departure of the Whartons from Pont Levoy. He had been allowed to accompany them as far as Blois, and as the train had pulled away from the long platform, bound for Paris and the unknown, the girl had leaned to him from the window, with a white face and tear-filmed eyes, and blown him a kiss. That was the last he had seen or heard of her, but he meant to find her again some day if he spent his life in the search. She had rejected his love unconditionally, without stating a reason—and at the same time had shown him by her tears, her sudden pallor, and the shadows of pain and pity in her dark eyes, that she loved him.

"That is the devil of it!" exclaimed Limerick. "And here I am mixing in a game that is none of my affair, when I should be hunting for her through all the quiet villages of France and England."

He pulled on his shirt and trousers, slipped his feet into the low moccasins, and went slowly upstream toward the clearing. Overhearing the voices of Sue McAvity and her mother in loud converse, he did not descend the bank at this point, but passed quietly along. Pierre's wife and daughter wearied him exceedingly. They were far more tiresome than Pierre and the boys. So he passed on, and

climbed the bank above the clearing. He heard the sound of the men's axes, and made his way toward it. He soon came upon Pierre, and sat down on the butt of a big spruce which the lanky settler had just felled. Pierre sank his gleaming axe in a stump, and also sat down, pulling a thin plug of black tobacco out of his hip pocket at the same time, and biting off a generous corner of it. The other lighted a cigarette. Pierre expectorated gracefully.

"Hot work," he said. "Darn these here pesky flies, anyhow!"

"By all means," said Limerick lazily. And then, "I think I'll go fishing upstream this afternoon. Want to come, Pierre?"

Mr. McAvity expectorated again, then swore calmly, but terrifically.

"Not me!" he said at last. "I'd be scart of meetin' up with that thar devil-eyed old feller I told ye about down to the village. He was big as a horse, an' dumb as a cow, an' his eyes was like holes in hell."

"He sounds interesting," said Limerick. "I'd like to see him."

The truth is, Limerick had seen Smith several times of late, but always from a considerable distance. He had joined McAvity for the sole purpose of keeping a watch on Smith's movements—to oblige that bounder, Grey, now in Europe—and so had made several secret expeditions up to Dan Mitchell's clearing. He had lain in the edge of the woods each time, and caught a glimpse of Smith. He had not been interested in his task or in the unfortunate and ignoble cause of it; but to-day he felt a whimsical desire to see Smith more closely.

There could be no harm in that, for Smith could not hurt him, and he certainly had no intention of hurting Smith.

"If you are afraid of him, why did you settle so close to him?" he asked. "There seems to be room enough in this country."

"There ain't a better bit o' land on the whole river than this here," replied McAvity; "an' it's a good thing to be handy to some one, even if ye happen to be scart of him."

"But who is this old fellow Smith who frightened you so with his eyes?" asked Limerick. "Dan Mitchell is the owner of the farm, so they told me at the mouth of the river. Is Smith a relative of Mitchell's?"

So he questioned McAvity to learn what the rumours of the country were concerning the stranger at Dan Mitchell's place. Needless to say, Pierre McAvity was ignorant of Limerick's real reason for spending the summer on Rocky River. Pierre was not unduly curious. He was content with his boarder's story of overwork and ill-health, and satisfied with his weekly five-dollar bill. The two had met for the first time in the village at the mouth of the river in May.

"Damnfyknow," replied the settler. "The folks down to the mouth don't know nothin' about him, an' I reckon they thought I was lyin' when I told 'em about the scare I got."

Limerick started upstream after dinner, ignoring Sue's somewhat broad hints that she was willing to accompany him and carry the landing net. The buxom, swarthy Sue was becoming a thorn in the side of the young man's spirit. He wanted to be left alone to enjoy his sweet and bitter memories

of the winter in Pont Levoy. Having accomplished his escape from Sue safely and politely, he made the first mile of his journey at a rattling pace, without pausing to fight mosquitoes or to cast a fly upon any of the tempting pools. To say truth, he was not a keen fisherman this year. Grimmer things than sport had come very suddenly into his hitherto care-free life.

Two miles below Mitchell's, Limerick joined his rod, ran his line, and tied his cast of three flies. There was still a fair depth of water in the river. He commenced to whip the stream, wading slowly up against the flashing "rattles" and around the quiet pools, casting ahead, and now to the right, now to the left. A half-pounder struck. He soon brought it to his knee, and landed it safely in his creel. Ten minutes later he hooked a larger fish, and was forced to give it his undivided attention.

When one is engaged in a difference of opinion with a brook trout weighing close upon a pound, it is advisable to put thoughts of even your best girl out of your mind. This fish seemed to possess the hardihood of a shark and the brains of a politician. After five minutes of fairly even fighting, with the advantage slightly to the fish because of a distrust of the tip of the rod on the man's part, Limerick placed his right foot and all his weight on a moss-slimed rock in swift water. He made a resounding smack and an amazing splash with the flat of his back. When he regained the perpendicular his appearance was greeted by a trill of musical feminine laughter, and the rod stood lifeless in his hand, and the line trailed limply downstream.

He shook the water from his eyes and ears. His hat was gone as well as his fish, but he did not go

after it. He saw a very big little girl, or a very short-skirted young woman, poised on a rock ten yards away. She was laughing point-blank at him. but he could see that she did not mean to be rude, was doing her best to control her mirth, and was at once ashamed of it and embarrassed by the cause of it. He stared at her in astonishment for a moment, then joined heartily in her laughter. The person who could hear and see Ellen May laugh without letting slip a few haw-haws himself was either not "all there," or tongueless, like poor Smith.

The young woman mastered her mirth suddenly, blushed crimson, turned toward the right-hand shore, and jumped lightly into the stream. The water took her to the knees, and splashed to her slim waist in a silver shower. Without pausing, she fled to the bank, and vanished among the bushes. Limerick stopped laughing, and waded ashore. He unjointed his rod, and slipped it into its canvas case.

CHAPTER VII

A GRIM ACQUAINTANCE RENEWED

"THAT must be Mitchell's daughter," thought Limerick. "She seems to be a cheerful soul, anyway. Wonder why she took to the woods like that?"

He examined his cigarette case, found that the cigarettes had not suffered from his brief plunge, lighted one, and continued on his way upstream. He halted frequently to listen and stare keenly at the wooded bank, wondering if the girl who had laughed at him and then run away from him had stopped to watch him from cover. He had not gone more than fifty yards when Smith appeared suddenly before him, followed by the girl.

The big man's eyes were like black fire beneath black ice. He leered at the other with his tongueless mouth. The colour slipped from Limerick's face, and he stared in mingled pity and horror at Smith's speechless lips and handless right arm. This was the first time he had seen the handiwork of Doctor Knoxley at close quarters, and he did not like it. He parted his lips to speak, but was stopped by a swift motion of Smith's left hand—the old, cautioning signal of finger to lip.

"Good morning," said Ellen May shyly. "I'm sorry I was so rude, but I couldn't help laughing. I hope you did not hurt yourself."

With a mighty effort and a great bewilderment,

Limerick turned his glance from the terrible face of the man to the lovely face of the young woman. He recovered his outward composure in a moment, but not his peace of mind. The shock of Smith's sudden appearance and of his daunting eyes and handless arm was forgotten for a moment in astonishment and admiration for the girl. Her voice, her words, her looks—all were a hundred-fold superior to anything he had expected to encounter on Rocky River. His knowledge of Sue McAvity had not prepared him for anything like this. His emotions showed in his face.

"I am Dan Mitchell's daughter," said Ellen May, as if in reply to a question. "Mr. Smith and I have been fishing."

"My name is Limerick," replied the young man, "and I'm spending a few months with the new settlers farther downstream—for my health, you know." He did not meet Smith's sardonic leer. "I started out this afternoon with the intention of calling on you," he continued.

The girl was silent for a moment. She felt ill at ease for no other reason than that she was not accustomed to conversing with young men. She blushed vividly, was angry with herself for doing so, and gazed down at her wet moccasins. She knew nothing of modern young men of the civilized world, and very little of any sort of young men. What novels she had in her possession were of fifty or more years ago.

"Let us fish back," she said. "Father and mother will be glad to see you."

She turned and moved swiftly upstream along the narrow strip of shingle which lay between the dark brush and the sliding water. The two men

followed. Smith suddenly laid his hand on the other's arm. The young man started violently at the touch. Smith drew a small pad of paper and a stub of pencil from a side pocket of his coat. He knelt, laid the pad on a flat stone, and wrote quickly with his left hand. Limerick halted beside him, and looked down at what he wrote curiously, but reluctantly. This is what the young man read, while Smith stared up at him with those opaque, sinister black eyes:

"I hope you are proud of your cowardly revenge!"

Limerick shook his head. He was not proud of the just punishment in which he had taken part, and he was honest enough to say so.

"Where is Grey?"

wrote Smith; and again he glared up at the other.

"Grey is in Europe somewhere," replied Limerick in a low vloce.

The big man sneered.

"He is afraid to come to look at me. He is a coward and a beast. I would kill him if he came near me."

He got swiftly to his feet, and grinned devilishly into the young man's startled and distressed face. Then he tore the little sheet upon which he had written into tiny fragments, and scattered these upon the water. He started walking quickly along the shingle, and Limerick followed him. They rounded a bend in the stream, and came upon the girl. She was fishing, and turned to them with a smile. The men did not want to fish, and so sat down on a sun-warmed rock.

Limerick was puzzled and disarmed by Smith's

calmness. He had expected a violent outburst of passion—a physical attack. He produced his cigarette case, opened it, and extended it to his companion. Smith shook his head. So Limerick smoked reflectively, and watched Ellen May at her fishing. But already he had ceased to think of Ellen May, or of the maimed man at his side. His mind was busy with recalling pictures of Alice Wharton to feed the hunger of his heart. Almost unconsciously he used this woodland beauty as a model about which to drape his memories of the girl he loved. The two were of the one height and shape, he thought. Alice was a trifle darker in tints of face and hair, and her mouth was smaller and more perfect than this girl's, and her grey eyes were a shade darker and infinitely more tender—so he thought. Alice's chin was rounder and whiter. Alice's general appearance was more dignified—or was it that he had never seen her in such an amazingly short skirt as that in which he now beheld Ellen May?

Smith roused him from his reveries by holding the pad in front of his eyes.

"Where is Knoxley?"

was written on the pad.

Limerick gasped, returning to the distressing problems of the time and place with a shock that was both physical and spiritual. For a little while he had quite forgotten this maimed sinner upon whom he had come to spy. Where was Knoxley, indeed! It was a question which he had intended to put to Smith, and now Smith had put it to him.

"I don't know," he said. "I've not seen him, or heard of him, since—that day. He returned to the canoe, you know, with Grey, and then he went

upstream again. We waited for him all night, and all the next day, about five miles farther down. Then I came upstream again, and I saw that you had been found by somebody and taken away, but I couldn't find any signs of Knoxley. I didn't care much for Knoxley, so I didn't waste much time in looking for him. I returned to Grey, and we went ten or twelve miles farther down, and waited a week for Knoxley. He didn't turn up, and Grey said that we had better get out. Knoxley has never been heard of since as far as I know."

Smith grinned, staring fixedly at Limerick as if he would read the secrets of his heart. Then he wrote :

" Grey paid that fellow three thousand dollars in cash for amputating my tongue and right hand. The doctor had nothing against me personally. He did it for the money."

" Good Lord ! " exclaimed Limerick. " I did not know that. It is not the story they told me. But you cannot deny the fact that you injured Grey and his family—and hundreds of others."

Smith moved his lips with something like a smack of relish.

" I did Grey's people out of a couple of million. But they have plenty left, damn them ! You seem to be a fool, young man—too much of a fool to be mixed up with men like Grey and Knoxley."

" If Grey, or the others, had left you to the mercies of the law," said the young man, " you would be in a penitentiary now—and for the remainder of your life."

The other sneered, and wrote :

" You don't know the law, or Wilbur Smith " ;

and then he got slowly to his feet, tearing the little sheet of paper into fragments as he did so. Limerick also stood up, with a clouded brow. He knew Smith for a rascal, and now he was beginning to know Smith's judges for rascals, too.

"Can you prove that Knoxley was paid to do it?" he asked.

Smith turned and nodded his head. Then, as if on second thoughts, he produced his pad and pencil again.

"I can prove to you that Grey paid Knoxley three thousand dollars in cash, and gave him a written promise of five thousand more, which was to be paid in New York. Grey is five thousand in pocket, as Knoxley has not turned up to collect."

"How can you prove it?" demanded Limerick.

"I will show you some day,"

wrote Smith.

By this time Ellen May had taken five fair-sized trout from one pool. Now she reeled in her line and shouldered her rod. She looked curiously at the men as they joined her. She had been watching them when they thought she was intent on her fishing.

"Let us go home," she said. "If you want more fish, Mr. Limerick, you can have some of mine. I have more than we can eat for breakfast."

"That is very good of you," said the young man. "Let me carry your basket. I have only one fish in mine."

He put out his hand to take the girl's heavy creel from her, but Smith was too quick for him—stepped in front of him with a sneer, and slipped the strap of the creel from the girl's shoulder to his own.

And from there up to the clearing he walked close beside Ellen May, ignoring Limerick absolutely.

The McAvity's boarder was hospitably received by Dan and Eliza Mitchell, though they could not disguise their curiosity entirely. They glanced inquiringly from the young man to Smith, for it was in both their minds that perhaps this stranger was one of their guest's enemies, or a detective in search of the man whom Smith had shot. This was a very natural suspicion, for strangers did not often come to the big farm on Rocky River. Dan had always been careful not to sing the praises of his country as a hunting ground for trout, moose, caribou, and deer. He knew enough of sportsmen from the Canadian and American cities to know that their visits to the wilderness often resulted in disastrous forest fires. They turned their glances inquiringly from the pleasant face of the stranger to the grim but familiar face of Mr. Smith, and back again, and learned nothing to confirm or quiet their suspicions. Smith showed no signs of uneasiness, and Mr. Limerick seemed friendly, but casual.

Extra care was bestowed on the supper by Eliza and Ellen May, and the meal was a decided success. Limerick talked well, and when he saw that both the women were interested in books and cities he talked charmingly on these subjects. When the meal was over the men moved to the veranda and burned tobacco. Smith and Dan smoked pipes and a very potent tobacco, and Limerick lighted a cigarette. Smith sat apart from the others, deep in thought, and gazed across the clearing at the screen of tall spruces along the river.

They had left the washing of the dishes till later, not wanting to miss any of Limerick's interesting

conversation. Besides, Ellen May had it in her mind to summon up courage enough to ask if he had brought any books with him into the woods. The girl had so little chance to get reading matter, and she craved it so. Limerick made it easy for her by saying, "Are you fond of reading, Miss Mitchell?"

"Oh, very. You would laugh if you knew the few books I have read. Mother treasures all of Scott's, in three big volumes, Tennyson's poems and two books of Stevenson's I sent away for last winter. "Treasure Island" and "Travels with a Donkey" and "Green's History of England" are almost the only ones. Father takes an agricultural paper, but it's not very interesting, is it, father?"

"'Tis to me. I don't git much pleasure from books. These woods are books enough fer me. My, but I could write some amazin' yarns myself if I jest knew the right words. Beat 'Treasure Island' all hollow I could, Ellen May. Guess I'll try some day."

"I wonder if you would like city life, Miss Mitchell. It seems a far cry from here to New York. Do you think about it?" said Ned.

"Oh, indeed I do," she replied. "If only I could see something of the world. It's so hard to imagine the big, busy cities. To see houses instead of trees stretching as far as one can see—crowds of people, instead of only animals, and heaps of books one can get hold of. I am sure I should be content to come back here for the rest of my life, if only I could see it all once. Do you know I have never even seen the sea!"

"Now, Ellen May," said Dan, "don't ye be gettin' discontented. This is the finest place in the world. Ye'd be like a fish out of water in one of them cities.

I know, I tried it onct. Them cities wasn't made by God. Stands to reason they baint half so wonderful as these here woods. An' animals is as interestin' as heaps o' human beings."

"The child takes after me, Dan," said Mrs. Mitchell. "I was always hankering to see something of the world. Though I never wanted to live in it—just see it. It would give one something to think of in the winter evenings. I love this life as much as you do, too, you know, Dan."

"Oh, well, you two beat me. Have your own way about it."

"Mr. Limerick," now spoke up Ellen May, "I've been wondering if you have any books with you. You would be giving me a great pleasure by lending me one, if you have."

"Why, of course. I'll look you up one, and bring it over very soon. You are welcome to all I have brought with me. I'm afraid I've brought more verse than prose, though."

Dan talked to the stranger about animals. Every New Brunswick woodsman is partial to a discussion of the habits of the four-footed dwellers in his own wilderness. Above all things, he likes to tell of his own experiences with the beasts to a person who does not know the animals or the country as well as he knows them. Forgetting his usual caution, Dan indulged a harmless vanity to the full. He found the young man to be a perfect listener. He talked of moose, caribou, bear, otter, mink, beaver, lynx, bobcat, fox, and musk-rat. Some of the things he told would have caused a certain critic of nature fakers to vault the barrier, pen in hand, had that distinguished gentleman seen them in print; but in spite of this fact I think Dan told the truth about

the animals—the truth as far as he had seen, at least.

Dan paused at last, realizing suddenly that he had been drawing a picture of the upper Rocky River country as a veritable sportsman's heaven on earth. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and shot an anxious glance at the young man.

"Maybe yer thinkin' of shootin' hereabout this fall?" he said.

"No," replied Limerick, coming out of a dream of Pont Levoy and Alice Wharton which even the battle between the cow-moose and the she-bear had not penetrated. "No, I don't think I'll shoot here this fall."

"But maybe yer thinkin' of comin' back next year?" queried Dan.

"No, and not next year," said Limerick, glancing at Smith. "To tell the truth, I'm not a very keen woodsman. I like the woods and all that sort of thing, of course, and admire this country and this river of yours greatly, but I don't think I'll ever come back."

"Was ye ever on this river before, by any chance?" asked Dan.

"Yes, once before; but not as far up as this," replied Limerick.

Smith turned his face towards him, and surreptitiously shook his head. The late dusk was beginning to thicken across the clearing. Limerick got to his feet, and expressed his regret at having to set out now on his homeward journey. He explained that Pierre McAvity would think that something had happened to him if he did not turn up before dark. The Mitchells did not want him to go so soon, but they did not try to keep him.

They felt that it would not be polite to urge a gentleman who had seen the wonders of the cities of the world to remain on their veranda and entertain them against his inclination.

But the temptation to be impolite was strong. Eliza and Ellen wanted to hear more stories of the great world, and Dan wanted to tell some more animal stories. However, they stood up when he did. The girl, who now looked as dignified as any one could wish in a full-length cotton skirt, went to the spring house to get his creel, into which she had put several of her own fish. Mrs. Mitchell sighed, and expressed a hope that she would soon see him again as she grasped his hand.

Dan expressed the same hope, then exclaimed: "But we'll be passin' yer place to-morrow. We got to git our cattle down to the meadows. We're late about it this year. They've bin pasturin' around home till now on some run-out grass land that ain't bin stumped yet. Me and Mr. Smith cal'late we can drive 'em down, with Ellen May to help us over the first five or six miles. I wisht ye could come along with us, Mr. Limerick, an' make a kinder picnic of it. We'll take the grub an' the outfit."

Limerick considered for a moment, then accepted the invitation. He saw in this expedition a welcome though brief escape from the giggles and embarrassing attentions of Pierre McAvity's daughter, and from the coarse and endless chatter of the new settler's wife.

Then Smith came forward and extended his left hand, at the same time looking the young man fair in the eyes. Limerick hesitated for a moment. He was beginning to feel sorry for this fellow, but he still disliked and despised him as intensely as ever.

His hesitation was only for a moment, however, and then he met Smith's hand with his own left hand. He felt something pressed against his palm, and was quick enough to wit to close his fingers on it, then to slip it casually into his pocket. Ellen May brought him his basket of fish, and he took up his rod and set out briskly across the clearing.

"We'll be down to yer place about eight o'clock," Dan shouted after him. He turned and waved his hand in acknowledgment and salutation. As soon as he reached the river he took from his pocket the little folded square of paper which Smith had placed in his hand. By the slow-failing light he read the following:

"Be sure to come with us to-morrow. If you are wise, you will not let my friends, the Mitchells, know that you are here to spy on me and are one of the three who brought me up the river last autumn. These people know that I am not a saint, but they would think worse of you than they do of me if they knew the truth. Be sure to come. I want to show you the place where Knoxley and Grey amputated my tongue and my hand. They should have killed me while they were at it, the cowards! It would have been safer for them, for I'll live to be the death of both of them. It is lucky for you, young man, that you are more of a fool than a thug. Otherwise you would be dead now—nearly twenty hours dead. Think it over, and thank your stars that you are nothing but a tool. I want to ask you some questions."

Limerick read this missive with strong and mixed emotions. He felt anger, disgust, and consternation. He raged at Grey for having led him into a terrible

matter to begin with, and for now leaving to him the dirty work of spying. His position was unpleasant, perhaps even dangerous. He had seen enough to know that Smith told no more than the truth when he wrote that the Mitchells were his friends. He did not enjoy being called a fool and a tool by a fellow like this. And what did the old pirate mean by the implication that he—Limerick—would have been dead twenty hours ago but for the fact that he was nothing but Grey's tool? He could find no answer to that question.

"He is right," he said miserably. "I am a fool—and a tool. Why did I let myself get mixed up in this awful mess? Damn Grey for getting me in it on the plea of friendship and justice and a lot of other high-sounding lies! He was afraid to do his own dirty work—and I do believe that all he was after was the most brutal kind of personal revenge. And as for Knoxley—well, if there is any truth in what the old man says about the money, then Knoxley was a worse character than Smith himself; and if he died in the woods all I've got to say is that he got what was coming to him. And he wants to ask me some questions, does he? Confound his cheek! I'll not answer his questions, and I'll not go downriver with him to-morrow What I will do is to clear right out of this country in a couple of days, and go abroad. I'll attend to my business, and let Grey attend to his."

He destroyed the paper, lighted another cigarette, and started downriver at a furious pace. Wrath stewed in him, not entirely free from a sense of shame.

CHAPTER VIII

A TRAGEDY AVERTED

The anger soon cooled in the young man's heart, and thoughts of Knoxley and Grey and the tongueless man passed from him. His pace slackened.

There was no wind in the black tree-tops; and the crooning of the shrunken river and the occasional cry of a bird were the only sounds in the woods. The air held no suggestion of frost, though the season was late. A furtive fragrance of spruce and dying fern-fronds and moss was in the air. The strip of sky above the dusky walls of the valley glinted with early, pale stars. The last tinge of red slipped down behind the western horizon. Spirits of peace and solitude moved in the soft gloom beside the river. The young man's spirit calmed and came into touch with the spirit of the hour and place. He felt at peace with the wilderness, but unutterably lonely and sad. He turned aside, climbed the sharp lip of the bank and seated himself on a mossy hummock. His thoughts wandered aimlessly and pleasantly, unchecked and undirected by his will. They dealt lightly and kindly with Dan Mitchell and Mrs. Mitchell and Ellen May for a little while; then they went farther back and farther afield and, at the same time, deeper into the still places of his heart. With his thoughts his heart went back and away to the little town and the poplar-fringed roads of that part of France which had become, for him,

Arcadie and the Country of Dreams, the garden of the Persian poets, the birthplace of Romance, the Forest of Arden, and the home of the Blue Rose. Scraps of verses came to him that seemed, in one way or another, to apply to his case and that magic land:

Was it the wind I heard, starting the leaves athrill?
A wind in the golden birch when the rest of the wood was still?
Was it the wing of a bird, high up in that leafy place,
That gleamed so white to my eyes, like the mask of a peering face?

And again:

Slowly the first lights break
Across the dewy lawn.
I only am awake, of all the world,
Here with the creeping dawn.

The nightingales have slept,
The roses fall'n on sleep,
And I alone have kept the watch I pray
My heart may ever keep.
The pale lights of the dawn
To gold fires pass.
Dear girl, when I am gone from this green place,
Pity my footprints in the dewy grass.

It was immaterial to him whether or not the verses that he murmured were of his own making or the outcry of some other lover. For he was young and in love, and more than half a poet. Youth and love have made poets of less likely material than Ned Limerick. And he had lost that which he loved: in the very heart of the magic garden she had slipped tenderly away from him, out of his

vision and beyond his knowledge. He remembered the story of the Unattainable Princess, as sung by a French poet. He lay back on the moss and tortured himself with his sweet sorrow.

The last tinge of twilight left the world. The grey sky between the spires of the black spruces darkened to deepest purple and the pale stars brightened. The narrow valley of the river, between its walls of spruce and pine, was black as the pit by now, save for a glimmer of starshine here and there on the sliding water.

The young man's eyes closed, opened and closed again. He slept and dreamed of Alice Wharton and Pont Levoy and the grey river and pale green forests of Mont Richard. An hour passed. Footsteps sounded on the dry shingle between the bank and the shrunken water; but Limerick did not hear them. He was far away from Rocky River and its loneliness and shame.

The flame of a match flared in the dark, falling and leaping as the breath of the unseen smoker drew upon it through his pipe. Then the tiny red spark of the matchstick fell to the pebbles and vanished. The sound of the stumbling feet drew nearer to the place where Limerick slept, and passed. And there was another sound, vague and low, as of dry, half-choked sobs.

Limerick awoke sharply, several seconds after the sounds of the stumbling feet and stifled sobbing had passed, as if some sense that had not slept in him had heard and prompted him. He sat up, wide awake, and listened. He heard only the soft croon of the shallow, sliding water. A feeling of uneasiness possessed him. He got noiselessly to his feet and descended the bank to the pebbles. There he paused

for a few seconds, with every sense alert, then moved forward cautiously through the dark. He had not gone far before he detected the scent of burning tobacco on the air. At that his advance became even more cautious than before. He heard the stumbling footsteps and followed them on tiptoe. They moved to the left and changed to a sound of scrambling on the steep bank, then to a rustling in the bushes at the top of the bank. Still he followed, moving noiselessly up the water-torn face of gravel and clay, into the screen of alders and through that into the underbrush of young spruces. Here he lay flat on the moss and strained his eyes against the darkness in front and to the right and left, for the sounds which he had followed had died away. He lay very still, breathing guardedly. He guessed the unseen prowler to be Smith, and he wondered what mischief the unfortunate old sinner was up to.

A small yellow flame flared into being suddenly not twenty feet away from Limerick, and close to the ground. It grew and held steady in the still air, showing to the watcher, within the circumscribed circle of its illumination, the left hand and large face of Smith. It disclosed the silent one seated on the moss. The match was evidently a wax vesta, for when it was laid on its side on the toe of Smith's boot it continued to burn. The left hand was withdrawn into the gloom beside the massive body of the man, only to appear again in a second, holding something white. This proved to be a tallow candle, which was soon lighted at the spluttering flame of the match, and stood on end in the moss.

"Does the old devil mean to set the forest afire?" Limerick asked himself.

He squirmed forward a distance of several feet,

then lay motionless again. The flame of the candle stood straight in the still air. It illuminated Smith's large face, strong body, and out-thrust legs. His eyes were black as pools of black water in the yellow glow; and for several seconds they stared straight in front, in Limerick's direction, until the young man feared that he was detected. But this fear was soon dispelled by the other's actions. A heavy sigh escaped from the maimed one. It sounded as if it tore itself direct from his breast. His lips were motionless and set. He passed his hand across his forehead and sighed again. His fixed, wide gaze lowered to the candle-flame, and there remained for close upon a minute.

Ned Limerick became restless. He wriggled forward a distance of a few more feet and changed his position. He was keenly curious concerning Smith's intentions. Why had the fellow walked so far from his home to stare at a lighted candle? Surely he had come to do something more interesting than glower at a little yellow flame.

Smith straightened his shoulders suddenly, raised his glance from the candle and thrust his only hand into the left-hand pocket of his open jacket. He drew forth something dark that gleamed in the candle-light. He drew his legs together, placed it on his knees, and stooped his head over it.

Limerick could not make the thing out at first, and squirmed a yard or two nearer. He saw the other's hand busily at work. He heard a faint, clean-cut sound, as hard as metal and as smooth as oil. Then he saw that it was a revolver which Smith held on his knees.

Limerick remembered a passage from Smith's last written communication to him;

"*It is lucky for you, young man, that you are more of a fool than a thug. Otherwise you would be dead now—nearly twenty hours dead.*"

"He has changed his mind," he thought. "He is on my trail now. He means to kill me, after all."

An unnerving chill crept along his spine. He gazed stupidly at the dumb man, like one spell-bound and hag-ridden in a dream. He saw Smith raise the weapon slowly; and then, in a flash, he realized the intention. He scrambled to his feet, and his voice escaped him in desperate violence, without conscious thought.

"Drop it!" he screamed.

The pistol fell from Smith's hand—and, next instant, the foot of Smith descended upon the candle, and the place was swamped with darkness.

Limerick did not cry out again. For several minutes he stood motionless, crouched forward; and then he turned and moved cautiously away. When he regained the bed of the stream he drew a deep breath of relief.

"If he wants to kill himself, it is no affair of mine," he murmured.

CHAPTER IX

MR. LIMERICK LOSES HIS TEMPER

When Ned Limerick reached the McAvity cabin he was greeted by a shower of questions from Mrs. McAvity and Sue. Where had he been? Why had he stayed away so long? What had he done without his supper?

"I had supper with the Mitchells," he informed them.

Pierre sat up at that, and asked if he had seen the old devil with the terrible eyes and no hand. Limerick replied, with unfailing good nature, that he had seen the man with the eyes and found him quite harmless; that the man's name was Smith; also, how he had happened to encounter Smith and Dan Mitchell's daughter on the river. Sue demanded to know the age of the Mitchell girl, and what she looked like.

"She is a mighty pretty girl," replied Limerick frankly. With the back of his mind he was still busy with Smith's communication. "And she seems to be clever and well educated, too," he continued. "I did not expect to meet a girl like that on Rocky River, I can tell you."

No sooner said than repented of. This is what comes of talking with only a corner of your mind on the subject under discussion. Limerick flushed with embarrassment, tried to add a saving clause, stuck, and stammered hopelessly. Sue and her

mother tossed their heads. Their swarthy cheeks flamed darkly, and their shiny black eyes glittered. The elder of the two boys saw where the trouble lay, and burst into a guffaw of derisive laughter. Pierre, of slower wit, now followed suit. His wife turned on him furiously. If she had been a little closer to him she would have hit him. Limerick mastered his own strong desire to laugh, though it cost him an effort.

"Present company always excepted, of course," he ventured lamely.

This was received with a fresh outbreak of unmusical laughter by Pierre and the young men. The boarder frowned and shook his head at them, then lit a cigarette and permitted himself a furtive smile.

"Educated, is she!" sneered the blooming and swarthy Sue, with the spirit of some remote old Iroquois ancestor looking out of her eyes at the unfortunate Limerick. "Well, I guess there's other girls on Rocky River as has bin to school. *We* ain't always lived in the woods. An' pretty, is she? More so than you expected to see in these parts? Well, there's no call to be insultin' about it, even if she is. What d'ye call pretty, anyhow, Mr. Limerick?"

Limerick was for peace at any price. He sighed profoundly. What a fool this Susan was, anyway, and what a devilish temper she had. He wondered how many bloods were mixed in her, and reflected that she must have inherited some of the very worst blood of each race represented in her. He had seen her in a temper before, but never at himself.

"Upon my word, I don't know what you are kicking up such a shindy about," he said. "You

look mad enough to scratch somebody's eyes out, Sue, and you don't look as charming as usual. The Mitchell girl is pretty, as I said before. She looks something like you, Susan—when you are not in a bad temper."

These McAvity women were evidently two of the most childish of all the children of nature. They swallowed this without a gasp, though it stuck in the crop of Bill, the eighteen-year-old son, and caused him to wink tearfully at Limerick. Sue subsided. Her head ceased to toss, her eyes ceased to glitter, her plump cheeks and high cheek bones took on a milder tint. She giggled sweetly, and playfully boxed Brother Bill's ears; but her hand was naturally heavy, even in play, and Bill swore like a stream driver in a jam of logs.

With peace restored, Limerick ventured the information that he had been invited by Dan Mitchell and Mr. Smith to join them in a trip downriver and back that would occupy about two days and a night. This innocent statement caused another disturbance. Sue looked hot and suspicious, and wanted to know if "that Mitchell girl" was going along. Mrs. McAvity and Pierre feared that the attractions of the Mitchell establishment and family were beginning to draw their five-a-week boarder away. The woman said that she didn't see what he wanted to go gallivanting 'round the country for, and Pierre mumbled something to the same effect. As we know, Limerick had decided not to go with the cattle drivers; but this impertinence on the part of the McAvitys sent his intentions about as a change of wind turns a weather vane. These ignorant people had taken advantage of his good nature before, but never so flagrantly as this. With one thing and another, his

temper had been rasped seriously during the past hour or two. This was the last straw—the last rasp. He jumped to his feet, and strode across the kitchen to Pierre. He laid a slender but muscular hand on the big settler's shoulder, and stared down at him with a white face.

"Come outside," he said. "I want to speak to you."

"Huh?" queried Pierre, frankly astonished by the tone of the young man's voice, and somewhat upset by the look in those glowing eyes. He got heavily to his feet, however, and followed his boarder out of the house. The others, astonished and uneasy, crowded after them to the open door. Out among the stumps, and within a yard or two of the tethered cow, Limerick turned upon Pierre McAvity. He was still angry.

"See here," he said, "I want you to understand that you and your precious family are getting on my nerves, and if you don't mind your own business in the future I'll find some other place to live. Do you think you are my guardian? What business is it of yours, or of your wife's, if I go upriver or downriver—or right back to the settlements? I've been too confoundedly good-natured with you. For two pins I'd give you a poke in the jaw that would jolt you into your proper place. Put that in your pipe and smoke it."

For half a minute a silence that you could stir with your finger lay over that portion of the wilderness. It was broken by an apologetic oath from Pierre. Sue uttered a tearful scream. Limerick turned, marched into the house without a glance to right or left, lit a lantern, and retired to his room. Once there his rage subsided, and he felt keenly

ashamed of his outburst of temper. He had been childish and savage—as savage and childish as those ignorant bushwhackers themselves.

However, there was nothing to be done about it now, so he placed the lantern on the box at the head of his cot—as it had been the night before, when Smith looked through the window at him with sudden death in his hand, sped or withheld at the whim of a finger—and went to bed. He read a chapter or two of some novel, smoked a couple of cigarettes, then extinguished the lantern. His sleep was heavy, but distressed by grotesque dreams. At one time he found himself lying inert on the surface of a pool in the little river, unable to move hand, foot, or tongue, but still possessed of the power of sight. Smith sat on the bank above him, with a malignant grin on his big face, in his hand a huge sheet of paper, upon which was printed the words: "You have been dead twenty hours."

Again, he was in his room in the hotel at Pont Levoy. The Whartons were in the courtyard beneath his window, asking him to come out for a walk along the road to Mont Richard; but Pierre McAvity and his wife stood at the door of his room, each armed with a long knife, and would not let him go out. The horror of his position was ridiculously keen. In reality, those knives would have excited nothing but his anger; but in his dream they frightened him to the very deeps of his soul. His other dreams were more fragmentary than these, more mixed, and equally absurd and depressing. He awoke at six o'clock, glad to find that his waking world was a saner thing than his dreams, at least.

Breakfast was a quiet meal. The McAvitys were subdued and anxious. Limerick's quick and un-

expected display of anger had opened their eyes to the fact that they had a man for a boarder, and not just a weak-spirited thing attached to five easy dollars a week. Even Sue understood that this hitherto soft-spoken, easy-going young man was to be handled with care. It was in Sue's mind and heart that it would be worth her while to capture and marry a man who could afford to do no work, pay five dollars a week for the pleasure of living on Rocky River, and sport a real silver cigarette case and a twenty-dollar trout rod.

Sue had a fine, large idea of her own charms. She had not spent the last five years of her life in a sawmill town for nothing. Until the fracas of the evening before she had never entertained a very high regard for Mr. Limerick's intellectual and spiritual qualities, though she had always regarded him as a desirable object of pursuit and capture; but now she admired him, and felt afraid of him. The Iroquois blood in her veins ran fast at that first hint of masculine mastery and hot, physical courage in him. His better and more manly qualities were wasted upon her. She could not see them. She would not know them if seen. That was Susan, the daughter of Pierre McAvity!

Little was said by any member of the family during breakfast. The boarder talked politely of this and that—of the work of Pierre and the boys at chopping, of the state of the oat, buckwheat, and potato crops among the burned stumps, of the chances of fine weather for the next two or three days. Pierre agreed anxiously with everything he said. Pierre was a coward—and he liked those easy five-dollar bills.

After breakfast Limerick made a light pack of a

couple of blankets, several boxes of cigarettes, an extra shirt, and a few toilet articles.

"I hope ye'll be comin' back," said Pierre. "Ye ain't mad about last night, I hope. We wasn't meanin' to offend ye nohow, mister."

"Of course I'm coming back," replied Limerick. "Don't you see that I'm leaving my books and most of my kit? I'll be gone only a day or two. As to what I said last night—well, Pierre, I didn't mean to be nasty, though I meant pretty nearly all that I said. I lost my temper—a thing which I don't often do, as you know. I hope it won't happen again."

The van of the herd appeared in the river off McAvity's clearing shortly before eight o'clock, splashing through the pools and pausing frequently to snatch at a bunch of grass or weeds along one shore or the other. The main body appeared a minute later with Ellen May, mounted on Red Boy, at the frisky heels of the yearlings. When she caught sight of Limerick at the edge of the river, with his pack all ready on his shoulder, she waved her hand, and pulled the gelding around toward the shore. He lifted his hat, then moved along beside her stirrup. And that is how they vanished from the suspicious, glittering regard of Sue McAvity and her mother.

Ellen May held her horse down to a walk, and Limerick walked at her stirrup. They talked cheerfully of the things before their eyes—of the little, common things of the wilderness. She told him that her father and Mr. Smith were a couple of hundred yards behind.

"Mr. Smith seems to be a well-informed old gentleman," he said, anxious to discover just what the

girl thought of that seasoned offender. "He does not look like a man who has lived always in the woods."

She glanced down at him with a frown on her forehead, and a shadow of displeasure in her eyes. She bit her under-lip, and her cheeks lost a little of their pink beneath the golden bloom of the sun tan. He felt swift misgivings, and his eyes wavered from hers.

"You look both kind and honest," she said. "Why do you pretend?"

He felt suddenly very small and despicable. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I am not judging between you and Mr. Smith," she said, "for I know nothing about his past life; but you must think me very stupid to think that I do not know you for one of his enemies. He did not tell me. He has not told me anything. You do not look like the kind of man who would cut off the hand and tongue of even your worst enemy. I am sorry—sorry to think it of a man like you. It was cruel—deathly cruel, even if he deserved it. Why didn't you let the law punish him?"

"How have you learned that I had anything to do with him?" he asked. His face was white. His voice trembled. "I took no part in the maiming of him, anyway," he continued, without waiting for an answer. "I admit that it was cruel. He is a dishonest old pirate, who has ruined dozens of people; but I'm ashamed of the part I played."

"Did he ruin you or your parents?" she asked gravely.

"No," he confessed, shaking his head. "Oh, I admit that I was a fool and a brute to have anything to do with it. A fellow whom I knew very well—

or thought I did then—talked me into it. He had lost a great deal of money through Smith. He got at me by showing me several people—one of them a widow—who had been robbed of every dollar they possessed by that man. And two people—both old people who had lost all their savings—killed themselves, as the easiest way to get along without any money. He cheated the poor as well as the rich. I soon got worked up to the required pitch of anger, though he had not injured me or any of my people. He had been a stranger to me before—that time."

"I believe you," she replied. "I will not repeat what you have told me. Now I understand why he does not hate you as he hates some people. There is some good in him."

"He knows that I was only a tool in Grey's hands," replied the young man, with a strong note of self-disgust in his voice. "I've been made a fool of. It was none of my business, and I wish to heaven I'd never set eyes on the fellow. But the man who actually performed the operation has not been heard of for nine months."

He told her of Doctor Knoxley, and she listened with shadowed eyes and trembling lips. She was afraid, and yet, when he had finished, her only comment was that a person who would do the thing that Knoxley had done deserved a worse fate than death in the woods. Secretly she was glad that Smith had shot that monster.

She halted, and they waited for Dan and Smith to overtake them.

"Your two friends are worse men than Smith," she said.

"And what do you think of me?" he asked.

"I cannot understand your case," she said frankly.

"Even my father, who is an ignorant backwoods farmer, could not have been talked into taking part in a deed like that. Even Sol Gabe, the Indian, would not have done what you did. I think you must be very, very weak."

Mr. Limerick found that a hard pill to swallow, but he gulped it.

"And I think you are not very bright," she added gently, "from the way you confessed to me that you were one of the three. I did not know for certain until you told me. I judged, from what I could see, that you and Mr. Smith had met before—and I knew that you smoked the same kind of cigarettes as one of those men."

She told him about the empty box which Sol Gabe had picked up, and then showed him a cigarette that had fallen from his own case the night before.

"You were rash," she continued. "If I happened to be Mr. Smith's daughter I think I would be tempted to kill you. He has a daughter, you know—and a son."

"I didn't know," said Limerick wearily. "You asked me to be honest with you, and now you despise me for my honesty."

"No, I do not despise you," she replied. "I don't know what to think of you. I can see that you are not bad, like poor Mr. Smith; but I cannot understand why you took part in that cruel, unmanly deed."

"I'm sorry for it, God knows!" exclaimed the young man.

"I am sorry that I spoke as I did," said the girl. "I had no right to, and I beg your pardon. I am sorry for Mr. Smith—more sorry than I should be, perhaps—because he worries about his children. But

he tries to hide his grief—and his hate, as well. You will do nothing more to injure him, I know, so let us drop the subject."

"I promise that I'll do nothing more to injure him. But what of his children? I know nothing about his private life. Are his son and daughter young babies?"

"Young babies? Oh, I don't think so. They must be grown up."

"I did not know he had a family. I hope they are grown up and able to look after themselves—and I hope they are not like their father."

Just then Dan Mitchell and Smith came up with them. Smith nodded at Limerick with an air and expression of saying: "So here you are! I knew you would not venture to stay away." But the young man had been dealt too frankly with by Ellen May to feel indignant. Dan's greeting was hearty. He shook Limerick's hand vigorously.

"Glad ye come," he said. "I stopped a minute at the new clearin' and asked the woman if ye'd joined Ellen May. She give me a look ye could whet yer axe on! I don't like the looks of that crew, I tell ye straight, and I'm almighty sorry they come up here. They look at me as how they wouldn't be above stealin' a feller's cattle."

"I don't know much about them, but I agree with you that they don't look honest," replied Limerick.

The girl rode forward. Dan increased his speed, and Limerick found himself elbow to elbow with Smith. Smith eyed the young man with an expression of sneering curiosity on his big face. He carried a small bag of provisions tied to his back, but his arms and hand were free. He fished his pencil and

block of paper out of a pocket, raised his maimed right arm, and held the block against it, and wrote quickly as he walked along. The skill of his left hand was remarkable. He passed the pad to his companion.

"That is a fine girl. She is gentle and good, and reminds me of my own daughter. I am almost as fond of her as of my own girl. Be careful how you behave with her. If you do anything to make her unhappy I will have your life for it. You and your friends have set me an example of taking the law into one's own hands, and you will find me an apt pupil."

"I have no intention of injuring the girl," replied Limerick. "I'm not that kind. Mind your own business."

Smith grinned wolfishly, and tucked away pad and pencil. They caught up with Dan Mitchell, and presently with Ellen May and the heels of the herd. The cattle travelled slowly, snatching at mouthfuls of grass and leaves by the way, and now and again breaking from the bed of the river up one wooded bank or the other. Whenever they broke from the course, Ellen May put Red Boy at the bank, full tilt into the bushes, and headed them off. Flies and mosquitoes were busy with the humans, the horse, and the horned cattle. To the excitement of mosquitoes, black flies, and "bite-um-no-see-ums" was added the delicate diversion of the big, whole-souled caribou fly. This last entertainer was all for shock tactics. He came at you straight and hard, struck, wheeled, and went away with a chunk of your flesh in his jaws. His methods added considerably to the liveliness and perversity of the cattle, and caused

Red Boy to bolt into the bushes more than once on his own account.

The expedition halted at eleven o'clock, where a little flat of alders showed an undergrowth of grass and sappy weeds. They built a fire for the boiling of the kettle, and another close beside it for a "smudge." Upon the latter they heaped grass and damp moss, and the bitter smoke of it, crawling upward black and slow, and spreading this way and that in a little baffle of wind, routed the hosts of flies.

This meal over, Ellen May mounted and set out on her homeward journey at a splashing gallop, scaring the hearts of big, drowsy trout into their gaping mouths. The others packed their kit, and continued on their longer journey downstream. The cattle, maddened by the flies, succeeded in topping the right bank once and scattering in the tall timber; and the herdsmen lost an hour in rounding them back to the bed of the stream. The upper edge of the wild meadows was reached soon after six o'clock. The fly-tortured, leg-weary cattle lowered their heads and hoisted their tails, and dived into that wilderness of alders and willows and tall, lush grass. The men washed their heads and arms in the stream, lit tobacco, and made camp. The camp included another huge smudge. Dan set to work with frying-pan and kettle. Smith and Limerick reclined in the choking shelter of the smudge. Smith produced pad and pencil.

"Here is where they did it," he wrote, and pointed to a big, sloping rock close at hand. Limerick said nothing to that. Smith wrote again:

"I have come to the conclusion that you are more of a fool than a rogue."

"You are a rogue yourself," retorted the other; "and a fool in the true meaning of the word. Try to be civil."

Smith seemed pleased with the retort. He grinned and nodded his head. He puffed vigorously at his pipe for a few seconds thoughtfully.

"Can you tell me where my boy and girl are, and what they are doing now?" he wrote.

"I know nothing about them," replied Limerick gently. "My home is in California. I came East for the first time six or seven years ago, to attend Harvard University. Since taking my degree I have spent most of my time in Europe and California."

"My boy went to Cornell," wrote Smith, in reply. And then: "So you took part in this without any feeling of personal hatred or revenge, did you? What was your motive? Did you think yourself God Almighty's chosen instrument of justice?"

"I read the papers, and talked with several persons whom you had ruined, and was of the opinion that you deserved a worse punishment than the law was likely to give you. I knew that you still had some wealthy confederates who would help you fight the law. But I've already admitted to you that I did wrong in meddling with you."

Smith sneered; his terrible eyes glittered on the surface, and burned blackly in their thick depths.

"You are dull," he wrote eagerly. "Grey wanted personal revenge. He cared nothing about the few small fry who happened to lose a little money. And he was afraid to have the law deal with me. Why? Because his own father was once my partner in business. Whatever tricks I learned that may not be considered quite honest, I learned from your dear friend's father."

"That is easily said," replied Limerick; "but can you prove it? You promised to prove to me that Knoxley was paid to—to maim you; but I notice that you have not done so yet."

Smith gazed across the valley at a spot half-way up the other bank with a smile on his face. It was a grim smile.

"I will prove it all to you when I am ready," he wrote.

"Supper is ready," called Dan, from the fire.

After supper Dan and Limerick and Smith started for the stream, with the intention of catching enough trout for their breakfast. They cut rods from the willows on their way. Dan had brought hooks and lines in his pockets. On the banks of the stream they separated, each searching for a likely pool. They were to meet again in an hour's time, as a lean-to had to be built for the night's shelter.

Ned wandered down fifty yards or more before seeing any spot that appealed to him. He did not feel in the mood for fishing—a terrible depression stole over him as he thought of Smith. How had he come to think he was called on to mete out judgment as if he were God? Grey, he had believed to be an honest, injured man, who wanted this wretched creature punished, not only for his own injuries, but for those of others who had suffered far more than he had. What a fool he was! And what a distorted view he had taken of the whole situation. With a violent effort he pushed these thoughts away and cast a fly into the stream. A rush and snap followed immediately, and in two minutes a trout of over a pound lay gasping on the bank. The next half-hour was full of excitement. The fish were looking for their suppers in no half-hearted fashion.

With eight good-sized trout strung on a willow branch Ned turned his footsteps towards the spot where the men had agreed to spend the night. He found Dan Mitchell and Smith waiting for him.

They had only caught four fish between them, neither of them being by any means keen fishermen.

The three started directly collecting branches with which to build a little lean-to. It was their intention to keep a smudge going during the night at the opening of the lean-to to protect themselves from the flies—else sleep would be impossible.

Having finished the shelter, and their smudge smoking effectively, they sat down to smoke a pipe before going to sleep. Dan was in a talkative and inquisitive mood, and after relating a few more woods stories of remarkable experiences with animals, he began questioning Ned Limerick about his life—where it had been spent, and just when he had been in this country before.

"Be you a New Yorker?" he said.

Ned told him he had been born in California and had lived there most of his life, but several later years had been spent in New York.

"I call myself a Free Lance," he said. "I write a bit of verse, more than a bit of prose, and have even tried my hand at pen-and-ink sketches, that my friends think not too bad. It all brings in the filthy lucre, which is the great thing after all."

"A darn sight easier I sh'd say than handlin' a plough and harrer. I couldn't do with the town though. Onct I went to Bosting, thinkin' I'd try some fact'ry work—it was afore I was married. It darn near killed me. I stopped a month, and I was that homesick I useter nearly cry—in the evenin's and early mornin's especially. I useter pine to hear the calves callin' and the old turkeys gobblin', and well thar, at milkin' time it just seemed as if I couldn't stand it nohow, so I ups and started for home. A darn good thing for me, too, or I'd a missed meetin'

Ellen May's mother. She was teachin' in our village that spring. Speakin' of po'try, Ellen May's grandad, her mother's father, not mine, for sure, wrote po'try. I can't rightly rec'lect any of it now, but it was pooty stuff. I think we got a bit put away to home. The old man was quite a scholard, but good for nothin' else. He knew no more about farmin' than my foot."

Dan paused and relit his pipe.

Smith was dozing, with his back against a convenient log.

"When was it ye said ye was up here afore?" Dan went on. "Ye did say ye'd been somewhere about here, I rec'lect."

"Oh, it was last year," Ned replied uneasily, gazing intently at the stream. "Just a little fishing excursion with some friends of mine. We didn't come nearly so far up. It wasn't much of a success. My friends happened to be poor sports, and so we stayed a very short time." He withdrew his gaze from the water and rose; as he did so he caught Smith's eyes fixed on him with an unpleasant glint in their depths, and a sardonic smile on his lips.

"Hadn't we better try to sleep now," he said. "It's after nine."

"Gosh, yes," said Dan. "We must start back by six. I'll wake ye both sharp five."

Half an hour later Dan and Smith were snoring lustily. It took Ned some little time to compose himself. He thought of Alice, of her brother, of New York, and his work—of countless things—his thoughts began to confuse him and make his head ache, so he got up and sauntered out into the moonlight. A sudden desire seized him to plunge into the cool water and soothe his twitching nerves. He undressed and waded out into the middle of the

stream. It was delicious to be away from the smoke, and no flies troubled him here. He lay down and rested his head on a flat, smooth stone. The moon was wonderful. Under just such a moon he and Alice had sauntered late on the night before her departure from Pont Levoy. Under that moon, that night, he had thought she loved him. Her eyes had shone so softly in the moonlight. They had seemed full of tenderness for him. How had he so deceived himself. At last Ned started back to the lean-to and crawled quietly into his blankets. He counted sheep religiously till at last he fell asleep, and did not wake until Dan shook him by the shoulder at five o'clock.

Dan prepared the breakfast. The trout were fried to a crisp, golden brown. The three ate with hearty appetites, and then packed up their blankets, cooking utensils and the rest of their eatables, and started homeward. They took considerably less time without the cattle. Lunch was eaten at eleven, and they reached McAvity's about three o'clock. Ned was tired, but the trip had done him good. Dan was a wholesome sort, with a good, sane outlook on life, and Smith had not given him a taunting word or a sneering look on the way back.

He accepted heartily Dan's invitation to come often, and spoke of bringing over a book that evening for Ellen May.

Smith and Dan proceeded towards their home, and Ned walked into the door of McAvity's cabin. Sue greeted him with a suspicious, curious glance, but after his outburst of the night before she did not question him. He volunteered a few cheerful remarks, and retired to his room to shave, change, and read till the evening meal was announced.

CHAPTER X

MR. PERCY GREY AND THE WHARTONS

I MUST go back a few months from the time of the last chapter, and three thousand miles away, more or less. From the wilds of Rocky River, the Mitchells, the gum-heeled McAvitys, the mysterious Smith, the cattle, and the caribou flies I must turn to ancient Abbotton, on the historic Thames, to the cultured and retiring Whartons, and that polished idler, Mr. Percy Grey.

Alice and Henry Wharton lodged in a fine, old, damp, red-brick farmhouse situated half a mile beyond the outskirts of the ancient town of Abbotton, and on the old coach road leading to Oxford. The people of the house were simple, kindly, and uncurious. They had been reduced from that fine old class of English yeomen, by agricultural depression and too much beer, to the renting of a farmhouse without the farm attached, and to the trials of lodgers. Many of their lodgers had proved sore trials indeed; but not so the young Americans, who were now their only lodgers. The Whartons occupied two front bedrooms upstairs and the big, oak-raftered sitting-room to the right of the stone-flagged hall. From any of their windows they could look along the short, elm-lined drive to the wide highway beyond the hedge of thorn and brambles. They paid good rent and a liberal sum in return for Mrs. Jorkin's attendance, and they gave very little trouble.

They had happened on this place quite by chance, within ten days of their emotional parting from Ned Limerick, in Blois. This place suited their purse

and their desire for seclusion. They were safe in their retreat from the advances of touring compatriots; and yet they could venture out at will, to Oxford or even to London, for new books, new clothing, or a few hours of harmless excitement. They looked as if they needed a great deal of excitement, taken in frequent doses, for they were very low in their spirits. They missed their friend Limerick more than either of them cared to admit to the other. Alice, of course, missed him more than Henry, for she loved him. She admitted this love to herself, and her brother knew it, but they never spoke of it. Both felt sure that she had done the right and fair thing in breaking with their friend.

Mrs. Jorkin's theory was that they had lost their parents recently, and that the girl had been crossed in love and the boy in some worldly ambition. She knew that they were respectable, anyway, for their manners were perfect, they read a great many very deep books in both English and French, and Mr. Henry paid their bills every month with cheques on Simm's London & Union Bank. She asked no questions, but she mothered them to her heart's content, and boasted about them—about their books and their manners—to her friends. One fretful-minded dame with the cares of a large poultry yard on her mind suggested that they were not brother and sister at all, but man and wife—or something worse. Mrs. Jorkin speedily killed this slander by permitting the woman a near view of the two. Nobody who had ever seen them could deny that they were brother and sister. They looked enough alike to be twins.

Some time about the middle of April the Whartons went up to Oxford for a day, and it was then and there Mr. Percy Grey caught sight of them. He had

not met them since they were children, and it was several years since he had even seen them, but he recognized them at the first glance. His cab followed theirs up from the station. He followed them on foot along the narrow, lively streets of the old city, and fairly confronted them twice before the windows of shops that had caught their attention. They looked at him once, and it was quite evident to him that they did not recognize him as a person they had ever seen before. They entered a bookshop. He waited outside, watching them through the window; and a few seconds after they came out he went in. He spoke to the young salesman who waited on the Whartons.

"I wonder if you can tell me the name of the lady and gentleman who have just gone out," he said. "I am an American. I am sure that they are Americans, and I'm under the impression that I know them. I did not like to speak to them, however, without feeling positive."

"Yes, sir; I believe they are Americans," replied the clerk. "They have been in here before, and they frequently order books by post. Here are five volumes to be sent down to-night—to Stuckly Manor Farm, Oxford Road, Abbotton. Great readers, sir. The name is Wharton."

"Wharton!" exclaimed Mr. Grey, with an unmistakable note of surprise in his pleasant, well-trained voice. "Wharton, of course," he added, with his usual composure. "They are the people I thought them. I must look them up. Thanks very much. By the way, have you anything new of George Moore's?"

He purchased four six-shilling books and half a dozen illustrated magazines, gave his address at the most expensive hotel in the place, nodded pleasantly, and left the shop.

"So it's Wharton, is it?" he reflected, with a cool smile. "Well, it sounds better, I must say. They look depressed, poor things, and are evidently in retirement. She is stunning. I had no idea she would develop into such a dashed fine-looking young woman. Stuckly Manor Farm, Abbotton, is it? Good! I'll just make a note of it."

Percy Grey was a man of the world in the politest sense of the term. Though he had been born in New York, he knew a dozen of the capitals of Europe, and some of Asia, as thoroughly as his native city. He had energy and brains; but he toiled not, neither did he spin. He was not much more than thirty years of age, but his eyes suggested fifty. He was tall, long-limbed, graceful, and alert in his movements. He was considered handsome by many people, mostly women. His features were clean-cut and distinguished, and his complexion clear and pale. His eyes were light grey, and though their usual expression was cold and aloof, they had been known to glow and melt upon occasion. Also, they had been known to flash with a very bitter spirit of cruelty and hate. He wore a small moustache, slightly upturned at the tips. His forehead was fairly high, but not broad. In fact, his whole head, including his face, was narrow. He wore his dark hair so closely trimmed that he could just manage to show a part in it, on the left side, and it was always brushed as smooth as a fur seal's pelt. He went always garbed in the perfection of good taste, from hat to shoes. He prided himself on the fact that he was more frequently taken for an English guardsman than for an American millionaire. The truth of the matter is that he had become such a cosmopolitan man of the world that he had ceased to be a good American.

It was easy for him to hide his true nature from the

casual observer, and even from those who considered him a friend. He posed as a philanthropist at times, and his name was always in evidence as a large giver to charitable organizations. This pose amused him.

He had planned the destruction of Wilbur Smith for weeks before deciding just how it should be accomplished. The plan he settled on appealed to him as being beautifully artistic. No one meeting him now, and observing his suave, smooth manner could have imagined the awful savagery of his nature.

At this time he had met Ned Limerick and, recognizing the fascination he held for the young man, played such a part that Limerick believed him to be the best comrade, the most kindly and hospitable man he had ever known.

He had told the story of Smith's villainies, and of his intention to be the champion of the widows and helpless, in such a manner—without a word of his own losses, that Ned had applauded him. True, when the nature of the punishment had been unfolded, the young man had been horrified, but with his persuasive voice he had made it quite clear and right that the villain's punishment could not be left for the law of the land to decide. A paltry term in prison! The monster must be dealt with differently!

On the day after their visit to Oxford, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, the Whartons sat on the lawn in front of the long, ivy-framed windows of their sitting-room, reading two of their new books. They heard a motor-car tearing along the Oxford Road; but as hundreds of cars passed the gate at the end of the shaded drive every day, they did not trouble to raise their eyes from their books. But this car made a jumping, wrenching stop right in front of their gate. At that they looked up and along the drive inquiringly. It was a big, dust-grey

machine, carrying a driver and had only one passenger. Already the driver was crouched in the road, and peering beneath the car.

"Something's gone wrong," said Henry Wharton. "A lot of these men who drive cars should be feeding chickens, confound them!"

He spoke fretfully. He had been forced by the cruellest circumstances to sell his own cars eight months before. His sister glanced at him with sympathy in her fine eyes, but said nothing. They continued to watch the grey machine idly. The passenger joined the driver in the road. He was a tall man, of a youthful and athletic figure, in a brownish-green cloth hat, a brownish-green Norfolk jacket, and grey flannel trousers turned up very high. He smoked a cigarette as he spoke to the chauffeur. The man possessed himself of some tools, and retired beneath the machine. The passenger idled about for a minute, glanced up the drive, hesitated, tossed away his cigarette, and opened the gate. He walked up the drive with a free, smooth stride that was a pleasure to watch; but the Whartons beheld his advance with something very much like consternation. They did not approve of having their privacy broken in upon in this way by a chance motorist. It had never happened before. Alice closed her book, as if preparing for flight.

"What does he want, I wonder?" she said. "Why, it is the man we noticed yesterday, in Oxford!" she added.

"May I trouble you for the correct time?" inquired the intruder pleasantly, halting within a few yards of them and lifting his hat. Then, quick as a flash, the expression of his face changed from that of polite inquiry to pleasure and surprise nicely tinged by doubt. The stage lost a master of histrionic

art when Percy Grey was born with a silver spoon in his mouth that was shortly to be transformed into gold.

"Surely I'm not mistaken!" he exclaimed, glancing eagerly from one to the other. "True, you were not much more than children when I last met you. That was at your summer place in Vermont; but I caught a glimpse of you in Florida two or three winters ago. Please don't say that you have forgotten me absolutely! My name is Percy Grey."

The Whartons, who had sat and stared at him with consternation in their eyes while he was speaking, now got from their low chairs, Alice in a dazed and aimless way, but Henry with an air of purpose. Henry stepped quickly in front of Grey, laid a trembling hand on his arm, and spoke swiftly and eagerly, in a very low voice. The girl stood beside her chair, watching the intruder anxiously. She saw the smile slip from his lips and eyes, and an expression of sympathy and distress take its place. She saw him take her brother's shaking hand from his sleeve, and grasp it firmly in his own. She heard him murmur: "I did not hear of it. I knock about, you know, and don't read a New York paper once in a year. I'm more sorry than I can say, Henry!" And she heard him protest: "Nonsense, my dear boy! A mistake, that is all, and one for which you two are in no way responsible. Well, then, a series of mistakes. It is touch and go very often in modern business, you know. The world soon forgets. I can see no cause for you to hide away like this and feel ashamed."

A little colour came back to her cheeks. She moved forward, and held out her hand. Grey turned to her swiftly, with the grace of a panther and the tenderness of a cat fondling her kittens, and took her hand softly and warmly between both of

his slim ones. Her hands were slender, soft, and cool. His were slender, hard, and dry. Their eyes met. Her glance wavered and lowered, and she withdrew her hand.

"It is very kind of you to—speak so," she said. "And you will continue to be kind, will you not—and respect—our desire for seclusion? You can understand why we live like this, now, I am sure—away from home and the people we used to know—and why we use our mother's maiden name."

"I understand—and yet I do not fully approve," replied Grey, his pale eyes, now very tender, dwelling kindly upon the girl's averted face. "You take it too much to heart, that little accident. You are both too young to surrender in this way—to lead this hole-and-corner existence."

"Any other sort of life is out of the question for us," said Henry grimly. "For one thing, we have the disgrace to consider; for another, our anxiety concerning our father; last of all, the need for economy. Mother settled some money on us before her death—enough for our needs, so long as we lived quietly. But as soon as I can discover some way of earning enough to support us, we shall return that money to some of the poorest of the people who suffered—through father."

"That is splendid of you," returned Mr. Grey earnestly; "splendid, but not business. It is not being fair to yourselves." He laid a hand lightly on Henry's arm, and led him aside a short distance. "I'll call you Wharton, if I must," he continued. "I'll respect your desire for—seclusion. No, I'll compromise, and call you Henry. Now, tell me, why are you so anxious concerning your father? What has become of him?"

"We don't know," replied young Wharton, in a

shaking whisper. "My God, that's the trouble We don't know! He was always a kind and affectionate father. Our mother was always happy with him. He vanished—that is all we know. I think, perhaps, he took his own life."

Mr. Percy Grey turned and gazed down the drive toward his car.

"Frightful!" he said. "Upon my soul, I'm more sorry than I can say. But you must not give up hope. He may be in—hiding. Things like that blow over. You must not give way to anxiety. You must both try to cheer up. As for the disgrace—well, I think it was nothing more than an accident. You do not understand business, and neither do I, for that matter; but I have lived longer than you and your sister, and so naturally know more of the world. Business men do not look at these matters with our eyes. What you consider a bitter disgrace they look upon as hard luck. I think Teed has fixed the car. Can't I take you two for a run? It will do you good, Henry—and your sister looks pale."

Young Wharton turned to his sister.

"Mr. Grey wants us to take a drive in his car," he said. "What do you say? It would do you good, I'm sure."

"You are very kind," said Alice, looking at Grey swiftly and timidly, "but I do not feel in the mood to-day. In fact, I am trying to forget things like that—like motor-cars."

Grey had tact enough not to urge her He was a man of the world, as I have said; and a very clever actor into the bargain. He accepted Alice Wharton's refusal with a grave and tender smile, and turned again to Henry. He patted him softly on the shoulder.

"You'll come," he said. "We'll run to Oxford,

and have a cup of tea, and I'll bring you back in time for your dinner. And if you'll permit it we'll talk over your future. Anyway, it will brisk you up."

Henry flushed a little, and glanced uncertainly at his sister.

"Yes, it will do you good," she said. "And there are not many of our countrymen in Oxford now, I think. But you will be careful."

"I'll go," said Henry, with a note of excitement in his voice. "I will get my overcoat. Just a second."

He returned in a minute, ready for the journey; and then the two men went down the drive, leaving Alice in her chair with her book face down in her lap and her eyes gazing far away into the mild April sky.

Teed sent the car forward at a spanking pace over the splendid road. Grey and Wharton lit their pipes. Grey glanced at the younger man, and saw that there was no need of talking for a little while, at least. Wharton was fairly absorbing the joy of the swift and comfortable onrush. Life of old had been full of this sort of thing. The colour deepened in his cheeks and his eyes brightened. And so the miles unrolled beneath the rushing tyres.

They had tea at Grey's hotel, in his private sitting-room. The light meal consisted of toasted muffins, cakes, and whiskies and sodas. And Percy Grey talked—talked in his most entertaining vein. He took the trouble to talk well, and the younger man saw that he was doing his best to make the time pass cheerfully for him. This set Henry's heart aglow. It flattered and soothed him to see that this rich man of the world which he had been forced to leave considered him of sufficient importance to take trouble for. So he poured himself a little more whisky. Perhaps his case was not so hopeless, after all.

CHAPTER XI

MR. GREY SCORES A FAILURE

PERCY GREY let young Wharton out of the big car at the gate of the drive leading up to the farmhouse in plenty of time for dinner. He refused Henry's invitation to stop to dinner, but not without a hint of reluctance in his voice.

"I'll not bother your sister this evening," he said, "much as I should enjoy a snug little dinner with you two. I must not forget that I am practically a stranger to your sister. But I'll call again in a few days. I've enjoyed this afternoon immensely. I'm a lonely sort of chap, you know—slow to make friends; but I feel that you and I should be good friends."

Then the big car backed and turned and hummed away into the grey-blue English April night. Henry found Alice in their own sitting-room, with a fire burning in the ancient grate, the lamp lighted, and the round table set for dinner. She was sitting before the fire, waiting idly, gazing into the coals. She turned and raised her eyes inquiringly to his face.

"Well, I enjoyed it," he said. "Grey is a good fellow. You must come along, too, next time. It'll buck you up. I asked him to come in and take pot-luck with us, but he wouldn't, though he seemed to want to."

"I am very glad he didn't," returned the girl.

"We are not living here for the purpose of dashing about the country with Mr. Grey."

"But he knows who we are," protested Henry.

"I don't like him," she said. "He is too—smooth."

Just then Mrs. Jorkin entered with the soup. The dinner was not as peaceful as usual. Henry took Alice to task for disliking Mr. Grey without knowing him. She retorted that Henry had no right to like him without knowing him. It was not a comfortable meal. Henry went to his own room, but returned as soon as Mrs. Jorkin had cleared the table and retired to the kitchen. He had a large, black pocket-book in his hand, and from this he drew several long, narrow clippings from newspapers. He began to study these.

"Why do you keep those things?" asked the girl.

"Here it is!" exclaimed Henry excitedly, looking up at her with a white face. "I thought I had seen something of the kind. The man is a brick, I tell you. Of course he knows! Could a man lose hundreds of thousands and not know? And yet he never even hinted it to us!"

"What do you mean?" she asked faintly, with a flickering of fear in her eyes. "What has that—what have those papers—to do with—Mr. Grey?"

"Grey was the heaviest loser," said her brother. "Hundreds of thousands, and yet he did not mention them. He told us it was only an accident—to save our feelings. And he did not even hint at his loss."

Alice sat for a long time in silence, her hands clasped tight. At last she spoke, in a low, strained voice.

"And he lied," she said. "He told us that he had not heard of it."

"But he lied to save us shame!" cried Henry

angrily. "For heaven's sake, Alice, be fair! He felt pity for us—and he tried to be kind."

"I don't like Mr. Grey," said the girl, "and I don't want his pity. He has bad eyes. If he comes here again I'm going away."

They were sorry for their little show of temper next morning, and talked the situation over quietly. Alice admitted that she was foolish to feel so sudden a dislike to Percy Grey, and that he had behaved very well. They agreed that it was unfortunate that Grey had found them out and recognized them, thus bringing the very thing from which they were trying to hide, and which they were trying to forget, vividly and disgracefully back to them.

Percy Grey did not appear again at the farm until three days after his first visit. Again he came in his car, and in the early afternoon. He stayed and had tea with the Whartons. He was very tactful, very kind, very entertaining. When he was leaving, shortly after five, Henry accompanied him to the gate. At the gate Henry laid his hand on the other's arm.

"I want to tell you that I know what a good fellow you are, Grey," he said. "And I know—that you lost a lot of money—in that—smash."

Grey turned abruptly and clapped a hand affectionately on the younger man's shoulder.

"Does your sister know that—about my loss?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Henry.

"I am sorry," said Grey. "I hoped that she would never know. Well, it can't be helped now. But never let me hear you mention it again. It didn't hurt me—and I want it forgotten between us. Understand?"

"I understand—that you are a brick," said young Wharton.

Mr. Percy Grey smiled as the big car raced smoothly away with him. He was proud of himself. Gad, what a young ass that boy was! But the girl—ah! she was quite another story. He had seen nothing to equal her for years. She interested him as no other woman had for years. But the devil of it was, to his way of thinking, she seemed to be a trifle standoffish. Was she simply bashful—or was she wise? He thought it over, and decided that it did not matter. Bashful or wise, she would prove a child in his skilled hands. He had many methods, and in this case he had an advantage that put the result beyond a doubt. But he decided to play the game so cleverly that there should be no need of showing anything but the hand of velvet.

Mr. Percy Grey was what some blunt-tongued persons would call a bad egg. He might even be called a cad without straining the case to suit the term. And he was clever; and he had a heart like flint. Flint will heat, but I do not think it is easily melted. He was without honour; he was as clever and cruel as sin, and he looked and sounded like a gentleman.

In the course of the next ten days Mr. Grey and the Whartons saw a great deal of one another. They made several half-day excursions in Grey's car, and the Whartons dined twice in Oxford with Grey. Alice could not see any way of refusing to be entertained by him, in the light of his tactful, kindly manner and his heavy losses at her father's hands. And it seemed to her that he was really very fond of her brother.

Grey soon saw that this girl's fine, fearless, straightforward nature was not to be fooled by ordinary methods; and, day by day, his infatuation for her became more insistent. And one afternoon, at the

farmhouse, when Henry was out of the room, he seized her hand and told her that he loved her. He did it well—so well that the girl believed him. But she withdrew her hand quickly and explained to him, very gently, that she felt greatly honoured by his declaration, but could extend no hope of ever feeling any affection in return. She was not watching him at the time, and this was well for her peace of mind. His face went white as paper at her refusal, and for a second the soul of the man looked out of his pale eyes. But only for a second did his eyes betray him. He caught her hand again, stooped, and touched his lips to it. He sighed, then squared his shoulders, and looked at her fairly, with a world of grief and devotion in his eyes.

"I cannot bring myself to ask you to forget it," he said, "but I beg you not to let it disturb our friendship."

For the first time she liked him. She felt a glow of admiration for him, and impulsively extended her hand again.

"As far as I am concerned, it has strengthened our friendship," she said.

Then Henry entered the room, and naturally the subject was dropped.

Percy Grey sat up very late that night, and thought hard. He had sense enough to see that Alice had escaped untouched from his wiles—that she felt no real tenderness towards him. Very well. He still wanted her. It was ten years since he had last wanted anything so much. He had not played all his cards yet, by any means. He smiled at the thought of the cards still unplayed.

"If it can't be done prettily," he reflected, "then I shall have to force things a bit. I must press a few more of my natural advantages into service."

In spite of the exhilaration of Percy Grey's society, Henry Wharton did not look well. He had always been busy, though never at any useful occupation, and now idleness and moping were beginning to tell on his health and spirits. Alice looked run down, too. The disgrace and anxiety preyed upon her. Percy Grey saw and understood, and decided to use what he saw. He discussed Henry's health with Alice, and Alice's with Henry. He was greatly worried. Alice felt such relief at finding his manner that of an elder brother instead of that of a dejected lover that she paid strict attention to everything he said about his fears for Henry.

"This is not the climate for him," said Grey. "It is too low, too muggy. He needs something bracing after all these months on this side—a climate where even the summer heat is bracing. I know of just the place for both of you. I spent a few weeks there myself one summer—and it is secluded enough, heaven knows."

"Where is it?" asked the girl doubtfully. "We don't want to meet people, you know; and we cannot afford an expensive trip just now, or a long stay at an expensive place."

Grey laughed gently, and pushed up the ends of his moustache with a caressing finger.

"When you once get to the place I have in mind," he said, "it will not cost you a cent more than a couple of dollars a day. In fact, when you have dismissed your guide, I don't see how it will cost you that. And you'll not meet too many people, I assure you."

He told her about Rocky River, away off on the other side of the Atlantic, away back in the wilds of New Brunswick. He described the forests, the hills, the brown and golden waters, with poetic fervour,

the fishing with the gusto of a sportsman. Henry appeared in time to hear a great deal of it. He was impressed, as was Alice, for both were fond of sport in the open. They had both fished some good streams, but never Rocky River. And Grey had been so thoughtful as to bring a map with him, which he produced and explained.

Alice looked at him, and her honest eyes told him that she was wondering if he meant to make the journey to that wilderness, and hoping that he did not. This insight into her thoughts did not cause him to feel more merciful toward her. But he kept his emotions out of his eyes.

"I should enjoy nothing better in the world than to show you that river, to act as your guide," he said. "But I am unable to offer my services—unless you wait until next year."

He saw the shadow pass from the girl's eyes, and his pulses twitched. He looked down at the map, and placed his finger on the spot where Rocky River enters the larger stream.

"But that is out of the question," he continued. "You two must have a change of air and scene now—immediately. I have business in London, and later in Berlin—family business. I'll not be able to get to the other side this year. But you can get a man to take you upstream in the little village at the mouth here. And you'll be able to buy your outfit and canoe there."

Henry was frankly excited and overjoyed at the prospect of a summer in the woods. The three talked it over, and after Grey had gone the brother and sister continued to talk. Both were keen about it now.

"I had forgotten there were such things as trout until Grey described some of those pools," said Henry.

Considering that Grey's description had been largely an effort of imagination, this was high praise; but Grey had not done much fishing on Rocky River. He had been too busy at something else during his only visit to that country.

"And we can afford it, too," continued Henry. "The passage to the other side—to St. John, isn't it?—is nothing, if we cross on a small boat. And up there in the woods we'll have something to do, and a chance to forget. We must go, Alice. You are looking badly, and that's a fact. There is no reason why we should stick around in places like this, even if we do want to keep away from people."

So they decided to go. During the next ten days they saw a great deal of Grey, who helped them with their plans. He gave them full directions as to the easiest way to reach the village at the mouth of Rocky River, from the seaport city of St. John. He made a list of the articles and supplies they would need. His advice to them was to ascend Rocky River for a distance of fifteen or twenty miles at least, and there make a permanent camp, away from inquisitive settlers, and where the fishing was at its best. He assured them that the stream was practically unknown to sportsmen. He wanted to present them with two small silk tents; but this they would not permit. They had their pride, in spite of their shame. So Grey suggested that they should purchase a few articles of their outfit in London, the aforementioned tents included, and, as he was running up to London for a day, he would be glad to get the things for them. This Alice could not object to.

The Whartons were to sail from London on May 15, on a small, slow boat that had been the "greyhound" of the Atlantic about thirty-five years before. Percy

Grey invented some very plausible excuse for going up to London with them. He accompanied them to the docks and aboard the ship, with a silver-mounted flask and a hundred superfine cigarettes for Henry, and half a dozen new books for Alice. They were both deeply touched by his thoughtfulness. It was a dismal day, and the ship looked old and sordid. While Henry bustled about, looking after their bags and boxes, Alice and Grey stood in a sheltered corner of the deck, near the main companionway. They had been silent for several minutes, gazing dismally at the crowded, murky river and depressing docks and shipping.

"Thank God she is a good sea boat!" exclaimed Grey suddenly.

Then he snatched up the girl's gloved hand and pressed it to his lips. He released it quickly.

"I'll not ask you for your address after you leave Rocky River," he said. "I'll be sure to find you some day—sure to, even if I have to hunt the world over for you. But don't worry about me."

Then he left her. At he head of the gangway he met Henry, and grasped his hand for a moment. Then he hurried down the gangway and vanished in the crowd of labourers, shabby idlers, and arriving passengers.

When Alice went to her cabin, a stewardess brought two great boxes of roses to her.

Alice and Henry Wharton were both fond of the sea—both good sailors. Their boat would take at least two weeks to make the voyage to Quebec, but they both enjoyed the thought of being so long out of touch of land. The passenger list contained no names they knew, so they felt at their ease—and inclined for the time to put their troubles away from them. They intended to rise early and retire early,

and avoid as much as possible, without appearing peculiar, the people on the boat.

At the captain's table, where they sat, they met a very charming old lady, a Mrs. Gordon, a widow, who mothered Alice directly. She was from Quebec, but had lived a great deal of her life in London. She was a very interesting, cosmopolitan person, who never lost an opportunity of forming new acquaintances, and Alice attracted her especially. Something in the girl's face touched her. The forlornness and sadness seemed so out of place in one so young and so beautiful.

With a kindly curiosity she questioned them. "Where were they going?" "To the woods?" "What a charming idea!"

They told her all their plans for the summer and a good deal about their past life, excepting their real names, and the disgrace of their father. When she asked about their father, having heard their mother was dead, they told her vaguely that he was in New York—too busy over things to wish them with him just then.

She insisted they should stay a few days with her in Quebec before taking their trip to New Brunswick.

Henry discussed his future with her one afternoon. She seemed so really interested in them both.

"I hate the cities," he said, "except occasionally. Office work of any kind would drive me wild, I know. I've been spoiled, I'm afraid. You see Alice and I had always expected to have plenty of money, we'd planned a pretty jolly life; but father lost nearly everything, so we're rather at loose ends. I'm trying hard to think of something I might not be a hopeless duffer at."

"Are you fond of the country, and horses and animals?" Mrs. Gordon asked.

"Rather!" he replied. "Horses are about the only things I know about—except motor-cars, perhaps. I don't want to be too long over finding something either, for what money there is must be kept for Alice. A man is all right a bit on his uppers, but it's a different thing with a girl. She must be looked after. It's tough enough for her without a mother."

Alice appeared on deck just then with a book under her arm.

"What are you two discussing so seriously?" she said, darting an anxious glance at Henry. For a moment she was afraid that Henry had been tempted to confide in this very kindly stranger.

"Oh, I'm just giving your brother a bit of advice," Mrs. Gordon replied.

Turning to Henry she went on, "Why not try farming and horse-breeding? Where you are going ought to be a good field for that. Have a look around this summer. You'd be your own master in that way. I think you'd find the east better than the west for your operations. There is a more certain result. There are no droughts, or big winds or insects in the east. Conditions are normal. Think of the enjoyment to be got out of life in the wilds, too. It is lived on a bigger scale there. Have you any capital?"

"Oh, yes," Henry replied. "I'd have enough to buy a small farm and a few horses, eh! Alice?"

"Why, of course! What a beautiful idea! Why did we not think of it before? You've been worrying all winter for nothing. I can live with you, and milk the cows, and make the butter. How jolly! What a pity though I never learned to cook. I'll have to practise this summer while we're camping. Perhaps our Indian will be able to teach me," Alice answered eagerly.

Henry laughed. "We've soon got that settled. Thank you for that suggestion. It's queer I never thought of the idea before. Of course, though, till I've heard you talking I knew very little about the wilds of Canada. Ordinary market-gardening sort of farming such as they do outside New York would not appeal to me at all, but this sounds so different."

"Different, my boy? It is very different! I've seen farms wrested from the wilderness—of course I don't suggest you doing that, it takes time—and they are wonderful. You could get cleared land, build a house of logs, buy your horses, plant your grain. There is a bigness about everything you do. You have a world of your own immediately. With your own cows, sheep, and hens you are practically independent of shops. Plenty of pleasure in connexion with that life, too, hunting and fishing of the very best right at your door. Hunting and fishing that other people come hundreds of miles to get, and pay hundreds of dollars for. I wish I was young again."

That night, up on the deck in the moonlight, Alice and Henry talked. Henry was full of Mrs. Gordon and her schemes for him. "I'll make good at that, Alice, you see if I don't," he said. "I feel as if I'd just waked up out of some hideous nightmare. Perhaps father will come to us there. I don't believe he is dead. Mrs. Gordon reminds me of mother, doesn't she you? Such a helpful, cheery kind of person. I wonder if mother had lived if father would have been the same?"

"I don't believe it," Alice replied.

They both became silent, thinking of the old life of a few years ago, before their mother's death. Their father's home life and his outside life were

two separate things always. Their mother knew nothing of his unscrupulous way of earning money. She had been his intense admirer. That he had fought his way up from comparative poverty by honourable means she never doubted.

"Henry," said Alice, "we are a very lonely pair; no one in all the world cares what becomes of us."

"That's wrong," Henry replied. "Are you honest in your dislike for Percy Grey, Alice? He is so attractive, it seems to me. I can't understand a girl not finding him so. Look what it would mean to you if you married him. You could live again the sort of life you are accustomed to. I'm quite sure he was in love with you. Didn't he say anything? Come now. Tell me."

"Bah! I hate him. Don't speak of him again. Marry *him!* The idea nauseates me."

She jumped from her chair, said good-night quickly, and ran down to her cabin.

The next day they landed. It was the first time they had ever set foot in Canada, and were rather surprised at the old-world air of Quebec.

"It's a bit of France," Alice said, in a pleased tone, as they clattered up the steep, cobbled street. "However did it come here? Henry, it takes me back to last fall. How I love it."

Mrs. Gordon took them straight to her home. Two days later she bade them God-speed. They never saw her again, but Henry had warm feelings in his heart for her always. She had given him an incentive, had awakened him from the numb, apathetic state he had been in since his father left them so suddenly six months before.

They left Quebec at noon on a Tuesday, and the next evening found them at their destination.

CHAPTER XII

SOL GABE AND THE WHARTONS

HAVING helped Dan Mitchell drive the cattle into the wild meadows, Sol Gabe went on downstream to his cabin and family on Dead Wolf. He remained quietly at home for a whole day and a couple of nights; and then his strong weakness arose, and demanded quenching. So Sol Gabe set out for Black Rock, the sawmill village at the mouth of the river. He made some purchases at the general store, including a red dress for his squaw and yellow boots for his children, and then headed for Jim Sly's place, feeling that the sooner he satisfied and overcame his strong weakness, the better for all concerned. He dealt the enemy a shrewd body blow the first evening, slept in Jim's back shop, and awoke in the morning eager and ready to continue the battle. But the second engagement had scarcely commenced when a young brother of Jim Sly's entered, and said that two sports had arrived the night before, and were now looking for a guide to take them upstream. Sol Gabe pushed his weapons aside—they consisted of a square-faced bottle and a small glass—and eyed Jim's brother.

"Sports?" he queried. "What they look like, hey?"

"Nope, they don't look like hay. They look green as grass," replied Billy Sly, who considered himself the wit of the village.

Sol snorted scornfully and returned to the battle.

"Man and woman," continued the boy. "Young, too; and say, she's the purtiest girl I ever seen. Brother and sister. You'd better git onto the job, Sol. They wanter go 'way upriver, an' stop all summer."

Sol Gabe corked the bottle, and thrust it into a side pocket of his jumper. He threw a five-dollar bill on the counter, scooped up the change, and left the place. Since the discovery of the maimed stranger up beyond the meadows, a year ago, he had been on the look out for visitors to the river. He had heard that the ways of the law are tortuous and blind to the lay mind. The police might appear even at this late day to look for Smith, or for the men who had amputated Smith's tongue and hand, or for the man whom Smith had shot. And what more likely than that they would come as "sports"—even as a brother and sister? Sol felt that it would be only fair to himself and his friends for him to keep an eye on these strangers, even if the conquest of the enemy had to be postponed for a little while. So he wandered through the village, looking for the "sports" who were looking for a guide. His head was clear and his eyes sharp, though his knees were wabbly.

Sol Gabe found the Whartons in the general store of the village, where one could buy anything from a keg of nails to a bottle of ink. The Whartons were buying bacon, beans, oatmeal, condensed milk, and a dozen more articles of food suitable to the requirements of a long sojourn in the woods.

"Here's the very feller ye're lookin' for," said the storekeeper, at Sol Gabe's wavering entrance.

The brother and sister turned, and Sol smiled,

nodded, and pushed the bottle deeper into his pocket. But the short neck and broad shoulders of the bottle continued in evidence.

"Do you know this river?" asked Henry Wharton, gazing intently at the face and person of the Maliseet, noting the good-humoured mouth, the honest eyes, the neck of the bottle, and the slightly sprung knees.

"You bet," said Sol. "Me know this river, Johnson—what?"

The storekeeper nodded.

"Sol Gabe sure does know Rocky River," he said to the Whartons. "He lives on Dead Wolf Brook, a few miles up, an' half the time he works for Dan Mitchell, forty miles upstream." He leaned over the counter, and continued, in a lowered voice: "And he's a good man, too, though he does git a helluva thirst every now and ag'in, and come in to Black Rock to wet it. But he don't drink none in the woods, I've heard tell. And he's honest. Ye couldn't git a better guide, Mr. Wharton."

"Have you a canoe?" asked Henry.

"Fine canoe," replied Sol. "You go upriver, maybe, an' fish?"

"We want to," said Henry.

Sol nodded, and leaned heavily against the frame of the door.

"Cost you one dollar every day, an' 'baccy," he said.

"It's a go," said Henry, stepping forward. He drew some loose coins from his pocket, and picked out two fifty-cent pieces. "And now, to begin with, I'll buy that bottle of gin from you," he added.

Sol Gabe glanced swiftly at the other's face, then gazed at the fireless stove in the middle of the floor for fully half a minute. Then he pulled the bottle

from his pocket, and, with an expressionless face, said: "You like gin, hey? A'right, me give 'im to you. Cost only sixty cents, anyhow. Dern cheap —what?"

Alice and Henry Wharton looked puzzled for a moment, but they were quickly enlightened by Mr. Johnson's laughter. So they laughed, too.

"Thanks very much," said Henry, and took the bottle. "I'm glad to see that you are generous—and a bit of a wag, Sol Gabe. Now, show me your canoe, and after that we'll commence getting our outfit aboard."

Half an hour later the Whartons and Sol Gabe set out on their long journey up Rocky River. The Whartons felt a sense of peace such as they had not known for many months. Already the flash of brown and golden water, the balm of shadowy forests, the clean vastness of the sky, was at work upon their hearts. Their disgrace and shame and suffering were of the great, heartless outside world of men and cities. Here they would get away from all that torture except the anxiety for their father, and the edges of their memories would be dulled. The clear sunshine and flashing water gave them no warning. The honest, dusky face of Sol Gabe gave them no hint of what the upper waters of Rocky River held for them.

Sol's canoe was a large one fortunately; but even so it was loaded to within four inches of the gunwales. Sol stood in the stern, and thrust the canoe steadily along, close inshore, with his iron-shod pole of spruce. He studied the face of Alice Wharton, and decided that his alarm had been unfounded. These two were evidently just what they called themselves—a brother and a sister eager for a summer in the woods, for the quiet and the fishing.

"Who tell you 'bout Rocky River?" he asked, blinking at the girl.

"Mr. Percy Grey," replied Alice. "He was up here once, fishing. Do you remember him?"

"Never see him," said the Maliseet. "A'mighty few sports come up in this country. Good country, too. You never here before, I guess?"

Alice shook her head. Sol thought of asking her if she had ever heard of a man named Limerick, and then he thought better of it. He was naturally cautious; or, rather, he was naturally inclined to let things take their own course without being forced by him. There was a faint chance that these two harmless-looking people might have something to do with the police, he reflected.

"Dern fine river," he said. "You git plenty fish, you bet."

At three o'clock in the afternoon they reached the mouth of Dead Wolf Brook, and here Sol Gabe landed, and took his purchases up to his cabin. He was gone only half an hour; but in that time he had managed to go to and from his cabin, tell his squaw about the contemplated trip upstream, and swallow the contents of a flask of whisky which he had hidden away for just such an emergency as this. His dark cheeks were slightly flushed when he rejoined the Whartons.

They ran ashore again at seven o'clock, and made camp for the night. Henry jointed a rod, and caught enough trout for the evening meal and next day's breakfast.

They made an early start next day. During the morning they were forced to carry the canoe and outfit around two short rapids. The desolation was lifting from the minds and hearts of the Whartons.

They wondered that they had not thought sooner of the wilderness. They came to the lower edge of the wild meadows in the afternoon, and at an hour before sunset they pitched their tents on the wooded banks opposite the upper end of the meadows. The river was not so low as it had been in the autumn of the year before, when Dan Mitchell and Sol Gabe had first met Mr. Smith. Sol Gabe thought of that time now, and a slight chill ran down his spine.

Sol pitched the two little tents, chopped wood, and cooked supper. The Whartons retired early, for the change of air made sleep a craving to them. Sol Gabe spread his blankets beside the fire, just out of danger from the sparks, and lit his pipe. He smoked for ten or fifteen minutes, then went noiselessly to Henry's tent, and listened for a few seconds. He gave ear at the laced flap of Alice's tent. Then he moved away and vanished in the outer gloom beyond the red circle of fire glow.

Sol Gabe knew his way, and dark as it was he travelled fast. He kept to the pebbly edge of the stream and the shallow water. Sometimes, when the course was fairly straight and easy, he jogged along at a trot. By half-past eleven he had reached the front of Pierre McAvity's clearing. After that the way was rougher, and it took him considerably over an hour to cover the remaining three miles to Dan Mitchell's big farm. It was close upon one o'clock when he reached the long, low house which sheltered his friends. He scouted around the house, and was rewarded by the sight of a light at Smith's window. He fumbled about in the dew-wet garden until he had collected a handful of small pebbles and hard lumps of earth. Then he straightened his back, and commenced tossing the pebbles and lumps of earth

at the dimly illuminated square of the window, one at a time. After the third throw a bulky shadow appeared on the cotton blind. He tossed another pebble, and the blind was pulled aside, the window pushed quietly open to its full extent, and the head of the mysterious Smith protruded.

"Sol Gabe down here," announced the visitor, in a loud whisper. "You come down. Got somethin' to tell you an' Dan."

The sash was lowered noiselessly, and again the thin blind fell across it. A minute later the lamplight vanished from the window. Sol made his way to the door of the outer kitchen. A finger of light soon ran along the bottom of the door; a bolt was pulled back. The door opened, and Dan Mitchell and his guest appeared on the threshold. The farmer held the lamp and a shot-gun, and Smith carried a revolver in his left hand. Apprehension was stamped white on Dan's face, but the glint in the dumb man's eyes was not of fear.

"Don't shoot!" exclaimed Sol. "There ain't nobody here but only me."

Smith lowered his revolver, and stepped back from the door.

"Is it the police?" asked Dan. "Where are they? When did they come?"

"Ain't here with me, anyhow," replied Sol Gabe coolly. "Lemme in, an' I tell you what for I come an' wake you up. Dern tired. Hungry."

"Sure, I'm forgettin' my manners, Sol Gabe," said Dan. "Ye scared me, an' that's no lie. Step right in an' set down. I'll git ye some milk an' pie. Where's the police? Are they after Mr. Smith?"

But Sol Gabe paid no heed to his friend's questions until he was seated at the table in the big summer

kitchen, with pie, cake, cold ham, and a jug of milk before him. Then he ate hungrily, for his journey had put an edge to his appetite. Dan Mitchell fussed restlessly about while the Maliseet devoured the food; but Smith sat down calmly, filled his pipe deftly with one hand, and smoked.

"Two sports come to Black Rock three days ago," said Sol, pushing the ham bone away from him, and tilting his chair back. "Me there. Want to come 'way upriver, fishin'. A'right. Me guide 'em. Young feller and young woman. Think they was police, maybe. Leave 'em in camp, down to big meader, an' come tell you."

"Police?" queried Dan. "Did ye ever hear tell of a woman policeman, Sol Gabe? But maybe she's a man, dressed up?"

"Guess she's a woman, a'right—and a dern purty one, too," replied Sol. "Think maybe they look 'round for that feller who git shot las' year. What? Come up to tell Smith, anyhow."

"Did they ask ye anything about him, or about Smith?" asked Dan.

"Nope," said Sol. "They don't ask no questions—nor me, neither. They tell me they hear all 'bout Rocky River from a feller call Percy Grey. Don't know him. Never see no Percy Grey on this river, what?"

Smith, who by this time had produced a pencil and pad of paper from a shelf above the table, turned sharply upon the Maliseet, staring with wide, black eyes flaming with rage. He let pencil and pad fall to the floor. His face was terrible to behold—big, twisted, suddenly stricken colourless. The lips moved as if with a painful effort to speak or cry out. The farmer and the trapper felt their blood chill and their scalps crawl on their skulls

Smith stooped and recovered the pencil and pad. His big body trembled from head to heel. He wrote hastily, then shoved the pad under Sol Gabe's eyes. Sol shook his head and appealed to Dan, for he could not read.

"What do they look like?" read the farmer, nodding at Sol Gabe.

"Look like young feller and young woman—sports," said Sol laboriously. "Brothers, so they say. I dunno what they look like. A'mighty purty girl, anyhow. Yep, you bet. Young feller not too bad."

"What is their name?" wrote Smith.

"She call him Henry, an' he call her Alice," replied Sol.

Smith made a horrible sound in his throat, swayed unsteadily for a moment, then sat down heavily and limply in a chair. He closed his eyes, opened them, closed them again. His trembling lips became ashen-hued.

Dan Mitchell strode to the pantry, and returned quickly with brandy in a teacup. He slid his left arm behind Smith's head, and held the cup to the ashen lips. Smith swallowed the liquor, then slowly sat upright in the chair. He opened his eyes, and stared blankly at the lamp on the table. At last he leaned forward and drew the pencil and paper to the edge of the table.

"Let them come on upstream; but say nothing about me or about the man who got shot last summer," he wrote. "Ask them questions about Grey—why he sent them here, and that sort of thing. Pretend that you know Grey. And let them come up. I want to see them—but I don't want them to see me. Tell them you saw a fellow on the river named Knoxley, last year, and see what they say to that.

But be careful. We have nothing to fear from the police."

Dan read this three times over to Sol. Then Smith lit the paper at the flame of the lamp, and let it burn to a black film between his fingers.

"A'right," said the Maliseet. "Gotter git back to camp before mornin'. Won't do much work to-morrow, you bet. Dern long walk."

With an unsmiling nod to the others he crossed the kitchen, and stepped out into the summer dark.

It was a weary and footsore Sol Gabe who dragged himself up the bank to the camp in the grey dawn, laid a couple of birch sticks on the coals of the fallen fire, and crawled into his blankets. He was asleep in a minute. He was awakened an hour later by Henry Wharton. He got to his feet grumbling, stiff of legs and dull of eye, and flung his blankets from him.

"What's the matter with you this morning?" asked Henry.

"Bad night," replied Sol. "Don't sleep none. Bite-um-no-see-'ems tickle me all night."

Bite-um-no-see-'em is the Maliseet-English name for the sand fly.

"Best stop right here to-day," he continued. "Good fishin'. Go on up to-morrow. What?"

"You know the river, and I don't; but to me this looks like a good place for a permanent camp," said Wharton. "These pools look like good fishing."

"Purty good, yes. Better farther up. Bigger fish. Bigger country," replied Sol.

After breakfast Alice and Henry went upriver a little way with their rods, and Sol Gabe lay down and fell asleep. While he slept, his old enemy the strong weakness returned to the attack. It came

back at him now craftily, and made a dream in his unguarded brain of the bottle which he had given to Henry in Johnson's store. He dreamed that Henry now gave the bottle back to him and that he drained it; and in his dream it was the finest liquor he had ever tasted. Then he awoke. Only a dream! He sat up and gazed furtively around him. The Whartons were not in sight. He got to his feet and walked slowly over to Henry's tent. There was the waterproof dunnage bag—a likely place. His nimble fingers quickly unfastened the mouth of the bag. Deep down among socks, stockings, flannel shirts, and what-not reposed the square-shouldered bottle.

Sol Gabe made short work of the contents of that bottle, even as he had dreamed. Then he refilled it with clear river water, recorked it, and returned it to its place.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MAN WHO COULDN'T WHISTLE

With buoyant head and wavering feet, Sol Gabe set out in search of the Whartons, bent upon questioning them according to Smith's instructions. He found them at a big pool half a mile above the camp, fishing earnestly and eagerly. Henry was at the head of the pool, and the girl at the tail of it.

"Hey!" cried Sol to Alice, all his sense of caution gone by the way of the top of his head. "What for Percy Grey send you up on Rocky River? He send you to fish maybe—an' maybe he don't. What? You don't fool Sol Gabe, you bet. What he send you for, hey?"

Alice Wharton turned and stared at him with an expression of indignant astonishment on her face. She drew her cast of flies in to her feet before speaking.

"What has happened to you, Sol Gabe?" she asked sternly. "Why do you speak to me like that?"

"Wanter know," replied Sol, stepping accidentally knee-deep into the pool. "You don't look like two sports to me. Look dern queer."

"You sound crazy!" exclaimed the girl. "And you look it."

Henry Wharton approached, wading quickly around the rim of the pool and reeling in his line as he came.

"What's all this about?" he asked angrily. "What do you mean by speaking to my sister in that tone of voice? You're drunk!"

"No," replied Sol, sitting down suddenly on a flat rock. "Ask one question, Henry. That a'right. What for Percy Grey send you onto this river? Grey one policeman, maybe? What?"

"Policeman?" exclaimed Henry Wharton. "Percy Grey a policeman? Man, you're drunk! Where'd you get hold of that fool idea?"

The Maliseet wagged his head in reply, and tried to look wise.

"And why do you ask about Mr. Grey now?" continued Henry. "You told us that you had never seen him—and never heard his name before we mentioned it. What are you driving at, Sol Gabe? Out with it."

"Know Grey a'right, you bet," replied Sol. "Know Doc Knoxley, too. You know him, maybe, what? You know Doc Knoxley?"

"Never heard of him," said Henry, eyeing the guide narrowly. "Why do you ask?"

"Wanter know," said the other. "You come up here lookin' for some one, maybe. A'right. You look for old feller with only one hand, what—or maybe for the feller who get himself shot?"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Henry curiously, looking at the other with sudden suspicion in his eyes. "A man with one hand? The man who got himself shot? What is all this about, Sol Gabe?"

But Sol had cleared and steadied his wavering brain with his own words. His own incautious questions had brought him to his senses. For a moment he gaped foolishly at Henry Wharton. Then he sighed profoundly, and brushed his hand across his eyes.

"Nothin'," he said, in an altered voice. "Nothin'.

Feel a'mighty queer. Drink too much bad gin. Yes, drink all that gin I give you."

"You should be ashamed of yourself, Sol Gabe," said Alice. "I did not think you were a thief. So you robbed our dunnage bag, did you?"

"Me own gin," protested the guide, delighted at the twist he had put in the conversation. "Me own gin. I give it to you."

"Never mind about that," said Henry. "Forget the gin, Sol Gabe, and tell me more about the man who got shot—and about the man with only one hand. It sounds interesting. So you are expecting the police up here, are you? Well, I assure you that we are not policemen, or even detectives. Tell me some more about the man who got shot."

"Nobody git shot," said Sol Gabe sullenly. "Drunk. Too much gin. Talk through hat. Head queer, too." He tapped on his forehead with a finger-tip. "A'mighty queer, some time. Git him hurt when little baby."

Sol Gabe was lyin', and the Whartons knew it. Henry laughed curtly.

"Very well," he said. "Have it your own way. But if you take anything more from the outfit without asking for it, your head will get hurt again. Remember that, Sol Gabe."

The guide went back to camp and sat down by the fire. He was disgusted with himself. Perhaps the Whartons were detectives. If so—and even if not so—he had talked like a fool. He had excited their curiosity. He could see that Henry was suspicious of him. He tried to remember exactly what he had said, but failed to do so. His head ached. The fumes of the cheap gin stewed in his brain. He wondered what a death from hanging by the neck would feel like.

After dinner, Henry told Sol to break camp and load the canoe, as they intended to go farther upstream. Sol worked gloomily, his honest spirit daunted by the gin and the fear of the law. They worked their way slowly up the little river, from pool to pool. Sometimes, where the water was very shallow, Sol and Henry stepped out of the canoe, and waded, pulling the canoe along with them. For hours they moved up the brown and amber stream in silence. The Whartons studied Sol Gabe's face furtively yet intently whenever an opportunity offered. They had grown suddenly suspicious of their trusty guide. Instead of disguising himself in liquor, he had disclosed himself by that ignoble medium, they reflected. He was in fear of the law—expecting a call from officers of the law—so conscience-stricken that even they looked like detectives to him. He had evidently shot some one. But why had he harked back to the subject of Percy Grey? Why had he denied all knowledge of Grey at the mouth of the river, and claimed the knowledge now? And yet Sol Gabe did not look like a murderer, though he looked gloomy and apprehensive just now.

They landed and made camp at six o'clock. There was a big, deep pool just above the camping place, and to this Alice made all haste with her rod, leaving Henry to help the guide and keep an eye on him. She hooked a large fish, and lost it after a short fight. She had better luck with the next that struck; and she had four trout in her creel when Henry shouted that dinner was ready. She was in the act of slipping the strap of the basket over her shoulder, when an utterly unexpected and strangely familiar sound came to her ears. She stood motionless, wide-eyed, the blood ebbing and flowing in her

face. She had heard some one whistle far away upstream. And it was a poor sort of whistling, too—out of tune, out of key, out of everything but the magical power to set Alice Wharton's heart fluttering and her pulses jumping. Could any two humans whistle so badly, she wondered. Her heart sank with the knowledge that it was so—that to hear it on Rocky River was to prove it. She sighed, and went slowly into camp.

The soft summer dark flooded into the valley while they sat at their meal. Sol Gabe brought an armful of white birch to the fire. He threw the wood down, squared his shoulders, and looked at his companions in the wavering firelight.

"You think Sol Gabe kill some feller," he said. "You think all wrong. Sol Gabe don't never kill nothin' more'n moose an' mink an' b'ar. You ask Dan Mitchell. You ask Johnson, down to Black Rock. Hell!"

"Then who killed him?" asked Henry, at a venture.

"Don't know who you talk about," retorted Sol haughtily.

Alice paid no attention to this conversation, strange to say. She was thinking of a man who sometimes tried to whistle a tune, and never came within a mile of succeeding. Her thoughts were far away in a little village in France, on the edge of the forest of young oaks, where one wide road runs straight to the old castle of Mont Richard, and another winds down to the fabled mushroom caves—and her heart was away with her thoughts. She looked up suddenly at Sol Gabe.

"Are there any settlers near here?" she asked.

Sol started sharply, and shot a slanting glance at her.

"Settlers," he said. "Yes, Pierre McAvity 'bout two mile upriver. Half-breed, him. Dern poor feller. Come up here just one year. Don't know him. Bad feller, maybe. Why you ask?"

If these two young people were really detectives, and the worst should come of it, he would do his best to throw suspicion on Pierre McAvity as a means of protecting himself and the Mitchells—yes, and Smith. He liked Smith.

"I heard some one whistling when I was up at the pool," said Alice.

Sol looked relieved, and said nothing; but Henry turned to his sister with a question in his eyes.

"Whenever I hear anyone whistle," he said, "I think of poor old Ned. Wasn't he a bum performer? He usually tried it when he was alone, and only about once a week—and that was enough. I wonder if he had any idea what tune he was murdering."

"That seems a long time ago," said Alice, in a very low voice.

"He was a good chap," said Henry, glancing furtively at the girl's profile. "A good fellow; but weak, I should say."

"Weak!" retorted Alice, sitting up straighter. "Why do you say that? I saw no sign of weakness in him. He was kind—he was considerate of others at his own expense—and he was loyal."

"Yes, that's what I mean," replied Henry hastily. "He wasn't a man of the world."

"What do you mean by a man of the world?"

"Well, he wasn't a man like Percy Grey."

Alice said nothing. She kept her thoughts on Percy Grey to herself.

"You ask any man on the river 'bout Sol Gabe," said the guide. "He tell you Sol Gabe one dern good feller."

"We believe you," said Henry. "Don't worry—and clean the dishes."

"Listen!" exclaimed Alice, clutching her brother's arm. "Some one is coming—wading downstream."

"Pierre McAvity, maybe," said the guide. "Maybe young feller stoppin' with him."

And then a new suspicion came to him. "You know him a'ready, I guess," he continued. "Hey? He come up a-spyin', too, what? Call himself Ned Limerick, what?"

The Whartons got to their feet and stared at the Maliseet in astonishment. Had the fellow read her thoughts, wondered the girl. She stepped closer to him and peered into his swarthy, fire-tinged face.

"What the devil do you know about Ned Limerick?" asked Henry.

"Good evening," came a voice from just beyond the circle of firelight. "That you, Sol Gabe? Who is talking about me?"

The girl's hands jumped to her breast. She turned slowly, woodenly, her face as colourless in the pulsing illumination of the fire as the little tents, her eyes shining like glass. Henry, too, seemed to be stricken motionless and speechless by some amazing emotion.

"That him," grunted Sol Gabe.

And a figure issued from the breathless outer darkness into the ring of wavering light. He halted and peered curiously, doubtfully, at the girl.

"Some one I know?" he queried. "I saw your fire."

"Ned!" gasped the girl.

"You!" cried Limerick. "Alice!"

He sprang to her as if he intended to seize her in his arms; but, with a mighty effort of control he caught both her hands in both of his, and pressed

them desperately between his palms. She did not move. And so they stood for several seconds, each staring into the other's amazed and eager face. Then Henry pulled himself together and stepped close to them.

"By heavens, Ned Limerick, is it really you?" he cried. "Where did you drop from? How did it happen? Bless my soul!"

Limerick released the girl's hands slowly, and looked at Henry.

"I just happened to come here," he said. "That is—well, I'm fond of this sort of thing. I've been here quite a while. There is nothing strange about my being here. But what brought you people to Rocky River? Chance? See here, I can scarcely believe my eyes! I had made up my mind to go out next week, and across to the other side—to hunt for you." He turned to the girl again. "Could it have been my prayers?" he asked breathlessly, wonderingly. "But no; I just prayed into space."

"You prayed?" she breathed.

Their glances clung. Blood, or the red fire shine, pulsed upon their faces. The pupils of their eyes expanded, their lips parted, the spirit of the man called and the spirit of the woman replied. Sol Gabe looked on in wonder. Henry stared at the two, and shifted uneasily on his feet. He laughed uncertainly.

"I don't know anything about your prayers, Ned; but it was a man called Grey who suggested Rocky River to us as a good country for fish," he said. "Yes, we'll have to credit Percy Grey with it—and chance."

The spell was broken. The girl's eyes lowered, and Limerick turned sharply upon Wharton with a harsh intake of breath.

"What's that?" he asked tensely. "Who did you say? Who sent you?"

"Let us sit down and talk," said the girl, in as commonplace a tone as she could command. "Sol Gabe, please put more wood on the fire."

The flames leaped, the sparks soared aloft in golden clouds. The three sat down on folded blankets at one edge of the circle, under the shadow of the high-drifting smoke. The men lit cigarettes. Sol Gabe watched them, smoking his pipe, from the other side of the fire. Henry told of the meeting with Percy Grey, in England, explaining that Grey had known them slightly at home, when they were children. He praised Grey. He told of the growth of the friendship, and of how it came about that Grey advised them to make the trip to Rocky River.

Ned Limerick listened to it all in silence, glancing anxiously at Alice whenever Henry's eyes were not on his face. Alice stared at the heart of the fire.

"That's how *we* happened to come here, Ned. Now what about you?" concluded Henry.

"Call it chance," said Limerick. "I had nowhere else to go; but I was on the point of leaving and returning to France." He looked at the girl, who continued her gaze into the fire. "To be quite frank with you, it was my intention to try to trail you," continued Limerick. "For a long time I had been fooling myself with the hope that you would take pity on me and write to the address I gave you, telling me where I could find you; but the hope was beginning to die."

All three were silent then for nearly a minute. Sol Gabe, on the other side of the fire, shook his ashes from his pipe and refilled it. He couldn't make anything of this talk.

"Are you sorry it happened?" asked Limerick, looking at Alice.

She said no word to that, nor turned her eyes to him; but her face seemed to quiver in the firelight like a patch of silver sand under clear-running water. There was pain in the quiver of it; and Limerick did not repeat the question. But his pulses jumped for joy, then slowed with a chill of fear for himself and pity for her. What was this mysterious thing that stood between them? She cared—and yet she was afraid of his love.

Henry began to talk about the fishing, and ask questions about the river and the people with whom Ned Limerick lived. Limerick answered the questions with a ready enough tongue, but only a fragment of thought. His heart and mind were in a tumult. What was the meaning of their friendship with Grey? And why had Grey sent them to Rocky River for their outing, of all places in the world? And, for his own part, this was the last place he would have chosen for the meeting—this place in which he had weakly and thoughtlessly been made a tool of by that pitiless beast, Percy Grey. And was Grey coming here himself? What was his game? Was he after Alice? He knew enough of Grey to suspect at least a part of his game, and his jaws hardened.

"You were speaking of Percy Grey," he said suddenly. "If you mean the smooth chap with all the money, the New Yorker, I know him."

"I don't know exactly what you mean by smooth," replied Henry, "but this man has plenty of money, and is a New Yorker when he's at home. He is a mighty fine fellow, Ned. He did not mention you—but, for that matter, neither did we."

"The owner of the *Niobe*?"

"That's the one."

"Is he coming to Rocky River?"

"No, worse luck; though he wants to. He can't get away from Europe this year. He told us that he had been on this river before."

"Are you a particular friend of his?" asked the girl, looking at Limerick gravely. "Have you known him long? He was very kind to us."

"I shouldn't call it friendship," replied Ned thoughtfully. "I have seen a good deal of him; but friendship is more than that."

"You mean that you don't like him," she said.

"That's not fair," returned Limerick. "He's not here. If he were here I could answer you, Alice."

"It doesn't matter," she said. "You don't like him—and I don't."

CHAPTER XIV

A GAME IN THE DARK

HENRY WHARTON protested against that statement of his sister's; but the girl held to it, though she would give no reason for her dislike for Percy Grey. Limerick said nothing one way or the other.

He was afraid of appearing in a bad light to Alice if he, without giving any reason, stated clearly his dislike and distrust for Percy Grey. Henry, he could see, thought it a bit of jealousy on his part. He did feel jealous, too, when he thought of Grey being kind to Alice. He knew just how fascinating the creature could be when he chose, and blessed Alice for her insight into human nature.

"Do you play your banjo often in these beautiful woods, as you used to in our little garden in Pont Levoy?" Alice asked.

"I haven't even got it with me," Ned replied.

"Oh, I have brought mine. Please sing me again my old favourite. You know which one I mean. The one I heard for the first time that night after we returned from our shopping trip in Mont Richard. Do you remember the funny little arbour where we used to sit in the evenings? How long ago it seems, and how far away."

"I know which you mean, my 'Blue Rose.' I've never sung it since."

Alice got up and went into the tent for the banjo. Ned moved his seat a little out of the firelight, and to an accompaniment of his own, sang:

Was it the wind I heard, starting the leaves athrill?
A wind in the golden birch when the rest of the wood was still?
Was it the wing of a bird, high up in that leafy place,
That gleamed so white to my eyes, like the mask of a peering face?

A round moon washed the forest an indescribable blue—
The blue of the unfound rose, the colour of dreams come true—
And there in the elfin radiance, deep in the elfin land,
Drunk with her tender beauty, my fingers enclosed her hand.

She led me, by aisles of azure and floating ramparts of sleep,
To a castle of hammered silver set in a magic keep.
She led me beyond remembrance of grief and failure and fame,
By dove-blue valleys of dream, to a garden that has no name.

Was it the wind I heard, starting the leaves athrill?
A wind in the golden birch when the rest of the wood was still?
Was it the gleam of her breast, or a bird, in that leafy place,
When I opened my eyes to the dawn and felt the dew on my face?

His voice was sweet and sympathetic, a baritone of no great volume. There was silence for a minute when he finished, then Alice took the banjo from him and carried it back to the tent.

"Thank you," she said simply. "You know how I love it."

Ned Limerick left the camp of his newly recovered

friends at ten o'clock, saying that he would be back in the morning. He managed to get possession of one of Alice's hands for a few seconds.

"I hope you do not mean to slip away from me during the night," he said, with an attempt at lightness in voice and manner; but the words shook in his throat, and his whole face was drawn pitifully with the anxiety and fear that filled him.

"Do you?" she began, and then: "You will find us here, Ned."

He went upstream to Pierre McAvity's clearing, stumbling like a star gazer. His mood ran like quicksilver, now up to the shouting point, now down to the groaning point. His pulses jumped with rejoicing at the thought of Alice so near to him, then stilled with the fear of a vague menace. But she did not like Percy Grey! That was encouraging. He found the McAvity's cabin in slumber and darkness. He wandered about the stumpy clearing between the shack and the river, in no mood for bed. He seated himself on one of the stumps and smoked. He could hear Pierre's cow chewing her cud contentedly in the warm dark, a little way to his left. He listened half heedlessly to the soft and reduced voice of the river murmuring liquidly from pool to pool. A fox barked somewhere across the valley. Beetles hummed by, and a mosquito or two made thin, exasperating music around his head.

He had consumed three cigarettes slowly, when a sound that was not of beetle or stream or four-footed beast caught his ear, and brought him out of his reveries and conjectures. The sound was a muffled, laboured human grunt. Ned jumped to his feet, and crossed to the top of the bank. There he paused for a moment, listening, then descended

quickly to the edge of the water and faced up the valley.

"Who's there?" he asked, at the same moment lighting a match.

The little flame leaped up, and discovered the large face and round eyes of Mr. Smith. The two men stood within a couple of yards of each other, eye to eye. A sneering smile wavered upon the dumb man's face for an instant, then the little flame went out.

"Oh, it's you," said Limerick, at a loss for a remark of more worth. He could think of nothing else to say. He had no right to ask Smith his business. The unfortunate old cheat had as much right as any one to wander about at night. What mischief could he do on Smoky River? That he was a menace to the Whartons was surely out of the question. And yet Grey was the old man's bitter enemy, and the Whartons were friends of Grey. He stepped aside, feeling a foolish aversion to having Smith bump against him in the dark.

"Where're you bound for at this time of night?" he asked pleasantly, and again drew his matchbox from his pocket.

The box slipped from his fingers. He heard it strike sharply on a stone, then find the water with a tiny splash. He could hear nothing more of Smith, though he listened breathlessly for a full minute Then he felt in all his pockets for a loose match and ran one down at last. He struck it with care. It was a wax match. As the little flame grew he held it high and looked to see Smith. But Smith was no longer in front of him. For a little while the match burned as strong as a candle in the still air; but it failed to disclose Mr. Smith. The man had passed

without a sound; or perhaps he had turned and retreated up the valley. Ned dropped the match and swore softly. Now he felt sure that the old man was up to some mischief.

Limerick could think of nothing better to do than to retrace his steps to the Whartons' camp. Why Smith should threaten the Whartons in any way he could not imagine; but he was taking no chances of harm coming to Alice Wharton. Even if Smith's secret expedition was projected toward the encampment, it might mean nothing more serious than curiosity. But, taking it for granted that he was bound for the newcomers' camp, how had he heard of it? The light of Sol Gabe's fire could not be seen from Mitchell's place certainly—no, nor from three miles to this side of it.

Limerick turned and moved cautiously downstream. He tested every step before settling his weight on the advanced foot. It was slow work, and tiring, and his eardrums fairly buzzed with the strain of listening for some sound of Smith ahead of him. But he heard nothing of Smith. The chances were that he had taken this fatiguing walk for nothing, after all—that Smith had turned at the encounter, and gone back to Mitchell's. Then another idea came to him. Perhaps Smith had intended to climb the bank at McAvity's clearing and pay him, Limerick, an unexpected visit. He wondered how it was that he had not thought of this before. The tongueless man was his enemy and with cause. That was it, of course; and doubtless the fellow had turned immediately and sneaked back to his adopted home. He remembered certain written words of Smith's that had suggested a former secret visit to him—a visit of a menacing nature. Should he turn again,

or should he go on and make sure that no danger threatened Alice? He decided to go on, for the ruddy glow of the fire was already in sight. He took two steps forward, then tripped upon something that was quick and alive, and fell heavily, full length upon the pebbles. Quick as thought, before he could begin to raise himself, some one sprang upon his back, and a blanket was thrust about his face and pulled tight. He shouted into the stuffy folds of the blanket. He tried to turn. Failing in that, he kicked upward with his heels; but another person sat on his legs. In spite of the best he could do, his hands were quickly imprisoned, and bound in the small of his back. Then he was yanked to his feet and led away, with a guard at each elbow. He was pushed and pulled up a steep bank, through a snarl of bushes. The fall and struggle had shaken him so that he was unable to think. He staggered and stumbled along between his captors, breathing heavily into the stifling folds of the blanket. He fell frequently, only to be yanked quickly and roughly to his feet and urged forward again. He knew, in a dazed way, that he was out of the bed of the river; but as to the direction of his course he had not the faintest idea.

After what seemed to poor Limerick a journey of several hours' duration through a hundred tangled woods and up and down a hundred hills, he fell flat again, and was permitted to lie still for a few minutes. At last the blanket was unwound from his head. He sat up and stared in front of him. He was seated near a small, newly lighted fire, in a little mossy well of the high forest. On the other side of the fire stood Smith, alone, gazing at him with eyes as black and round as an owl's. Limerick stared stupidly at

Smith for several seconds; then he turned his head slowly, this way and that, and surveyed his surroundings. He and Smith had the place to themselves, as far as he could see.

"Where's the other fellow?" he asked.

Smith grinned and shook his head.

"Give me a drink," said Limerick. "That damned blanket nearly smothered me. And untie my hands, for heaven's sake! The black flies are eating me."

The dumb man complied with the first request, serving Limerick with a drink of very weak Scotch and water from a very large flask; but he did not undo the cords at his captive's wrists just then. But he heaped damp moss into the fire, and so produced a cloud of bitter smoke which not only drove the black flies away, but nearly strangled Limerick. The drink, and perhaps the smoke to a lesser extent, cleared Limerick's brain, and brought to him a full realization of the assault of which he was the victim. So he asked Smith what he meant by it. The possession of a tongue gave him an advantage over the man of pencil and paper, and he made the most of that advantage.

Smith made no retort until the moss had been dried and consumed, and the little fire burned again with a clear flame. Then he produced his pad and pencil, stooped close to the fire, and wrote. He covered two of the small sheets of the pad, pausing frequently to scratch his chin with the pencil, the while Limerick waited impatiently to be informed of the reason for the assault. At last Smith passed the pad around the fire. Limerick could not take it. Smith laid it on his knee. Limerick refused to so much as glance at the paper, though he was eager to read. Then Smith produced a knife from a sheath at his belt and a revolver from his pocket, laying both on the moss.

He moved behind Limerick, snatched up the knife, cut the cords at the captive's wrists, tossed the knife aside, and snatched up the revolver.

Limerick wriggled his arms about until the circulation was restored from shoulder to finger-tip, then took up the pad and scanned it eagerly. Instead of finding an answer to his own question, he found a list of new questions, numbered, and a series of statements. Here is what the tongueless man had written:

"1. Who are the people with Sol Gabe?

"2. Do you know them; and if so, where did you meet them?

"3. Are they friends of Percy Grey; and if so, why and how?

"4. Why did you call on them this evening, and why did you return?

"5. Do they know that I am on the river?

"6. Do they know what Grey and Knoxley and you have done to me?

"Answer every one of these questions truly and fully, or I'll put a bullet through you. I have you in my power—and not for the first time.

"7. Is Percy Grey on the river; or do you expect him?

"Now speak up, young man, or your youth and folly will not save you again."

Ned Limerick read the amazing communication three times over, then looked up at the writer with an angry face and swore roundly. For reply, Smith presented the revolver, muzzle front, in a steady hand. By this time the fire burned strongly, with a high, clear flame, showing every line of the two men's faces, and Limerick saw that the other had lost colour since their last meeting. Indeed, the

dumb man looked ill and worried, yes, and grief-stricken. Also, he looked desperately determined. So Ned decided quickly to do what he could toward answering the questions.

"The people with Sol Gabe are Alice and Henry Wharton," he said. "I know them; they are friends of mine. I first met them in France, last winter, in a village by the name of Pont Levoy."

Smith stared at him intently, and nodded.

"They say that they know Percy Grey, though I never heard of it until this evening," continued Limerick. "They met him somewhere in England, but I was not there at the time. In fact, I was here. Grey knew them when they were children, it seems. I happened upon their camp quite by chance, this evening, and turned to go back to it, after meeting you, because I suspected that you were going there. They did not mention you, and neither did I. I have no idea if they know you are here or not; or if they know anything about you. They said nothing to lead me to think that they ever heard of Grey and Knoxley's expedition to this river. As for my part in that expedition—well, I have already told you enough of my remorse over that. I have eaten dirt by admitting that I was nothing more than a tool in Grey's hands. You are a rascal; but the biggest thief, liar, and rascal in the world should not be treated as you have been. He should be hanged. So should you, I think. As to your last question, I put it to them myself, and they told me that Grey was not on the river, and could not get away from Europe this summer. The boy, Henry, seems to admire Grey; but the girl does not like him. I learned that to-night."

He tossed the pad and pencil back to Smith, who laid aside his revolver and grabbed them up eagerly,

in a reckless hurry to ask more questions. He stooped low. His fingers were upon the pencil when Ned Limerick leaped across the fire and landed upon his head and shoulders. Then followed a brief struggle, at the end of which the younger man jumped back to his own side of the fire, with the knife in his left hand and the revolver in his right. He laughed victoriously.

Smith scrambled to his feet, panting, and glared across to Limerick. For several seconds it seemed that he would jump—and if he had it is certain that the other would have retreated rather than use the knife or revolver. This very thought may have been in the dumb man's mind; but if so he decided not to take the chance. He sat down suddenly and recovered the paper and pencil, and began to write as unconcernedly as though nothing unusual had happened. That the fortunes of war had been turned upon him did not seem to disturb him in the least. Limerick eyed him for a minute with mingled emotions the chief of which were anger and admiration.

"You may ask as many questions as you choose," he said, "but I'll answer them or not as I see fit. And I have one or two to put to you. To begin with, who helped you to bring me here, and why didn't he stay? Remember that the tables are turned."

Smith smiled grimly, and shook his head. He refused the question. Limerick threatened him with the revolver, but the older man must have read his weakness in his eyes, for he continued to ignore the question.

"Then tell me why you are so deeply interested in the Whartons?"

At that Smith stared at the other curiously for a long time. At last he wrote a few words, tore off the sheet, and threw it over.

"Can you give me your word of honour that you don't know why?" read Limerick.

"I give you my word of honour that I do not know why," he replied; "but I have an idea that you think they are spies whom Grey has sent up here to find out how you are getting along. If that is your suspicion, and the reason of your curiosity, then I can tell you that you are wrong. I know them well, and they are not that kind. Their friendship with Grey is simply chance, I feel sure. The girl dislikes him, thank God!"

Smith gazed across at him searchingly. Then he wrote again: "Why do you thank God that the Wharton girl dislikes Grey?"

"That is none of your business!" exclaimed Limerick warmly. "Please confine your literary efforts to answering my questions. I have no intention of remaining here all night. Answer my last question. Why are you so confoundedly curious about the Whartons? Do you know them?"

Smith wrote readily enough this time.

"You are a fool!" read Limerick. "I know who they are, and so does Grey, you may be sure. Ask something else."

"Very well," said Limerick, who was losing his temper again. "Who the devil are they?"

Smith made no sign of having heard. The little fire was falling low. Limerick, who was still standing, turned to see if any dead brush or broken branches lay near, with which he might replenish the fire. At the same instant a clear tongue of flame leaped up, and he saw Sol Gabe advancing stealthily upon him from the green wall of the trees, not six paces away. His nerves jumped at the sight, and as the little, sudden flame subsided again, and the darkness

swam in upon them, fear of the tongueless man and the Maliseet gripped him like fingers of ice. His hand leaped up, and the report of the revolver roared like a gunshot in that quiet place.

Limerick stood like a fool, gaping into the gloom. The fire was no more than a little mound of red coals behind him. For a second or two after the shot the place was silent as the grave. Then he heard Sol Gabe cursing softly.

"Did I hit you?" asked Limerick, in an unsteady voice. "Serves you damn well right if I did; and so the law will say. Where are you hit?"

He did not get an answer, for at that moment a heavy body—the body of Smith, no less—struck him a glancing blow which sent him staggering to one side, and knocked the pistol flying from his hand. He tripped on a root and fell, but pulled his feet under him as quick as a cat, and plunged into the woods. There he dropped instantly on to the carpet of deep moss, and gave all his attention to trying to hear what his enemies were about.

The oaths of Sol Gabe grew in strength. Some one thrashed about in the underbrush for half a minute, but fortunately did not come within ten yards of Limerick. I say fortunately, for Limerick's blood was on fire by now, and he still held Smith's knife. It was a fight of two against one, and the two had started it. They had ambushed him—two against one! Then let them come on!

Suddenly, by a glow through the screen of brush in front of him, he knew that some one had put more wood on the fire. He continued to listen breathlessly for a few seconds, then slipped noiselessly forward to get a clear view of the fire.

CHAPTER XV

THE TONGUELESS MAN'S PRAYER

LYING flat and staring out from beneath a sweeping bough of spruce, Ned Limerick had the scene of action set before him like the stage of a playhouse. The little, natural clearing into which he gazed was as round as the shaft of a well. The fire was in the centre of the mossy floor, and its wavering flames lit the high walls of green with a wild and romantic illumination. Close to the fire crouched Smith and Sol Gabe. Sol was winding a strip of linen around his right forearm, with the dumb man's left-handed assistance. So the Maliseet was winged; but the watcher hoped that the wound was not serious, for he had nothing against Sol Gabe except this night's work. The bandaging was soon finished, and evidently to Sol's satisfaction.

"He git away," said Sol, rising to his feet. "A'right. Best go home."

He pointed with his hand. "River over there. 'Bout two mile."

"That's just what I wanted to know," murmured Limerick. "Well, I'll be off, leaving you fellows to put the fire out."

Ned Limerick was naturally a good woodsman. He could keep a straight course, if once started on it, without sun or compass. He did the first fifty yards on the balls of his feet, cautious as a cat stalking a sparrow; but after that he walked boldly forward

at a good pace. The woods were black as the inside of a hat, but there were many round breathing holes in the tall timber, and into these sifted a lesser darkness by which the outlines of trees could be seen. From these pits he could catch the faint sheen of stars high overhead. He paused for a second or two, and studied the stars at every opportunity. He crossed a patch of open barren; next a swamp; next a place of huge "blow-downs." Beyond the heart-breaking scramble of the blow-downs he entered a fine grove of pines; and at the farther edge of the pines he caught the liquid breathing of the river below him.

He hastened down a long slope, and then scrambled down a short bank. His feet were in the stream. He lay flat and drank deep, after which he explored the shore and the water, and discovered himself to be about half a mile above the McAvity clearing. He rested for a few minutes, and thought over the night's adventures. It was quite clear in his mind that Smith had ambushed him, and transported him into the depths of the woods for no other reason than to question him about the Whartons. It seemed to him that Smith was curious about the Whartons rather than afraid of them; and the dumb man had not acted as if he intended to do the new-comers any physical injury. And he knew them; he had even implied, by his written questions and remarks, that, knowing them, and knowing who they were, might be two entirely different things. This puzzled Limerick; but on the whole, he did not feel as anxious now for the Whartons as he had. Whoever they were, and whatever their trouble, Alice was the woman he loved—and, perhaps, the woman who loved him in return. This last thought made the tongueless man's

eager curiosity seem of no moment, and the remarkably offensive behaviour of Sol Gabe even less important. Sol was in Smith's pay, of course. He was not a ruffian at heart. In the astonishing behaviour of these two he could feel no menace to Alice; and yet, in the bare facts that she knew Grey, and that Grey had recommended Rocky River to her, he felt a menace.

He decided to tell the Whartons all about his adventure—but not just then. They were in no danger from Smith. He was positive on this point, though just why he did not know. So he went to his boarding place.

The early dawn was breaking when Ned reached the window of his room. He was about to climb across the sill, when a slight sound on his right caused him to glance sharply at the door of the cabin. The door of unpainted planks stood open to the extent of a foot or so, and between the edge of the door and the frame the face of Sue McAvity peered out at him. Faint as the light was, Limerick detected the expression on the young woman's face without difficulty, and with a tingle of anger and shame. The shame was for the woman. He was not so blind that he had failed to read something of her feelings toward him. Her black eyes fairly glinted at him; her heavy mouth was twisted, and her coarse cheeks flamed. He knew that she was in a passion of jealousy as surely as he knew that she had no right to take even the slightest interest in his comings and goings. His instinctive politeness to all women had begun the mischief in that savage heart. He hated a scene.

"Good morning," he said cheerily. "It's a beautiful morning, Sue."

"I s'pose 'tis," she replied. "You seem to like the nights in the woods as well as the days."

"Well, they are beautiful, too. It's all a matter of taste."

"Be ye going to climb in at the winder? Seems a funny way of gettin' inter a house with a door in it. Seems almost as if ye be ashamed to be seen comin' in. Ye didn't come home at all last night, and I jammed down yer winder, so ye'd have to come to the door."

"What makes you so interested in my affairs, Sue? Don't be too interested, you know. I'm used to looking after myself, and though I'm good-natured as a rule, I can lose my temper as you know." As he spoke Ned pushed the door open and entered the house.

"You bin to Mitchell's place!" hissed Sue, and slammed the door.

"Confound her!" muttered Ned unhappily. "The idiot! Gad, how I'd tan her hide for her if she were a man. What the devil does she think I've been doing? But there—what matter. She's a savage—and worse."

He crawled into his room, threw off his damaged clothes, and went to bed. He did not light a lamp; but he lay and stared at the brightening square of the window for a few minutes, then slipped into slumber.

About half an hour later Sol Gabe returned to the camp, and half an hour after that Smith returned to his adopted home.

Ned Limerick was up with the sun, and, after a plunge in his particular pool, he breakfasted with the family. It was evident that Sue had not mentioned the hour of his return to the others, for he caught no question in their eyes, no curiosity in their manner.

But the girl watched him with sullen and restless glances. She sulked, and glared, and flounced—and all this made her doubly more unattractive than usual. She looked dangerous.

Limerick jointed his rod and left the cabin immediately after breakfast, not only eager to get away from Sue, but even more eager to call upon the Whartons. He struck downstream at a round pace, with the smoke of his first cigarette trailing behind him in the sunshine. It was a wonderful morning; but the foulest weather ever bred by an east wind could not have touched his high spirits that day. Alice Wharton was on the river! This same dancing water which even now wet his shoes, would go dancing past her tent in a few minutes. And he would follow the water. Lord, what luck! And less than a day ago he had thought her lost to him! He made pictures of his first glimpse of her as he hurried along. He would look up the bank and see her eating her breakfast by the fire, hatless, with the sunshine gleaming on her hair. No, she would look out of her tent at the moment of his arrival, with the morning flush in her cheeks, and the shadow of dreams still in her wonderful eyes, and her soft tresses flowing upon her shoulders.

He had covered about half a mile of his journey as blindly as a sun-worshipper, when he was brought back to earth by the clattering stroke of a pebble on a stone just in front of him, and a little to one side. He turned, and, to his utter astonishment, beheld Smith hurrying after him, and waving his maimed arm. He halted and stood his ground; but it is useless to deny that he swallowed a lump in his throat, and named himself a fool for leaving the cabin without his revolver. He watched the ap-

proaching Smith with alert eyes. He was relieved to see that the dumb man carried no weapon in his left hand; and next moment he was still more relieved to see that the expression on the fellow's face was of sheer and unmixed anxiety. The poor devil certainly did not look dangerous this morning. But Limerick was taking no chances.

"Stop there!" he cried, when Smith was within ten yards of him.

The other stopped for a second, then came on more slowly, shaking his head violently, and holding a little square of paper in front of him at arm's length. Limerick laughed, partly from relief, partly at the absurdity of those everlasting bits of paper. But he choked his mirth in an instant, ashamed of it. Smith's face was pitiful in its colourless anxiety. Limerick took the paper unguardedly, and this is what he read:

"I beg you not to tell the Whartons anything about me. Oblige me in this, and if I can do anything for you, at any time, I shall be glad to do it, even at risk of my life. I think you have a heart. The Whartons are in no danger from me. I made a mistake last night, for I was mad with anxiety. If you ever see me spying upon your friends, in the future, know that it is with no intention of harming them. Say nothing about me to either of them—please—if you have any heart—for God's sake! I cannot explain my reasons for this request—just now, at least; but I make it even more for their sakes than for my own. I knew them when they were children. They are the children of a person I loved. Please say nothing at all of your adventures last night."

Limerick stood for a long time in perplexed silence, now reading the desperate words in his hand, now studying the man's face. The eyes of the hard old

rascal met his unwaveringly, held his glance hungrily. Those thick, black eyes were now as he had never seen them before. They were pleading, like a dog's eyes. The big mouth and hard chin quivered, and the cheeks were colourless as dead flesh. There was no doubting the sincerity of his plea. And yet this was the ruffian who had ambushed him last night, and bound and gagged him, and threatened him with a revolver—yes, and had hired Sol Gabe to assist! Even so, he could feel nothing but pity for him now.

"Are you ashamed to have them know you?" he asked.

Smith nodded violently, then again with a hint of doubt. He snatched paper from his pocket and wrote quickly: "Call it that. It does not matter, so long as they do not discover me here—like this. That would be more cruel for them than for me. If you will not grant my prayer for my sake, then grant it for the sake of these young people whom you call your friends."

"But why all this mystery?" asked Limerick. "Can't you tell me why it would be cruel to them to discover you here? Do you think, for a moment, that they had anything to do with your—punishment?"

The dumb man shook his head. Glistening drops of sweat stood out upon his twitching face.

"If you do not mean any harm to them, and if the knowledge that you are here would be unpleasant to them as well as to you, then I promise to respect your wishes in the matter—for just so long as you leave them alone. And you must keep Sol Gabe in hand. If another attack of any kind is made upon me, then I'll put the Whartons on their guard. I must tell you now, however, that I believe what you say—and I am sorry that I cannot know the meaning of it all."

Smith stepped forward suddenly and snatched up Limerick's left hand in his own left. He gripped it with fingers as hard as wood, at the same time gazing at the younger man's face with every sign of gratitude and relief. So for a moment; and then he dropped Limerick's hand and found his pencil and paper again.

"The McAvity girl is trailing you," he wrote. "She looks dangerous. Take my advice, and have nothing more to do with her."

Limerick looked about him angrily, but saw nothing of Sue.

"I have never had anything to do with her," he said, "beyond wishing her good morning and good night. I wish she'd go to the devil—and that's the truth! I'm sick of the whole family, for that matter. Where did you see her?"

Smith turned his head a little to the left, and wagged it slightly as if to convey a caution. Then, as if Sue McAvity was already forgotten, he smiled quite cordially at the other, waved his hand, turned, and started slowly upstream. Limerick stood and watched him out of sight around a bend. At the same time he shot a few furtive glances along the wooded banks, in quest of Sue. He turned at last and continued on his way to the Whartons' camp.

So Smith had known Alice and Henry when they were children! And they were the children of a person he had loved! Ned Limerick pondered these things as he moved along the strip of shingle. Love, and the ashes of it, are to be found in strange places, he reflected. Who would have thought to look into the heart of Smith for affection or the memories of affection? There must be some good in the fellow, after all—some tenderness, a distorted sense of honesty, the shreds of torn honour. His undoubtable

courage might have saved these from absolute extinction. Very good! He was glad to know that Smith's nature held some impressions of virtues, even as a weather-worn rock may hold the imprints of ferns and flowers of a dead age. But all this did not help him to a solution of the mystery of Smith's relationship with the Whartons; but he honestly believed that the Whartons had nothing to fear from the dumb man. Unreasonably, but surely, he felt that Percy Grey was the only source of danger to the Whartons; and again he gave thanks to heaven that Grey had not accompanied the brother and sister to Rocky River.

Limerick met Alice and Henry a hundred yards or more above their camp, fishing. Their greetings were cordial. The girl's clear face and wonderful eyes showed signs of pleasure and embarrassment which called forth answering signals in Ned's cheeks and eyes. He joined her on the right-hand side of the amber pool, ostensibly to clear her cast of flies from an overhanging branch of willow.

"I can hardly believe my luck," he said, staring hungrily at her averted face. "By heaven, it seems too wonderful to be true! I called early, you see, to make sure of it. And until yesterday I thought I should have to search all over Europe for you—all over the world, perhaps—and perhaps even then not to find you."

She turned her face to him and looked him fairly in the eyes for a fraction of a second; then her glance wavered and lowered, the bright blood crept upon her temples, and tears glistened on her eyelashes.

"Please do not talk like that," she whispered. "It will make it impossible for me—impossible! I do not want to go from here—and it would—hurt—

to have you go. I want you to stay—to be near us—to see us often. But if you speak as you did just now—oh, can't you understand ? "

Though this was not entirely unexpected, Ned's face went grey as old canvas, and his eyes darkened with the shadow of pain.

" I cannot understand," he replied, in a shaken voice. " Sometimes I think I see light, more often I see a thing that frightens me—sometimes I am fool enough to feel hope. I try to understand ; I am trying at this moment, God knows—but I cannot."

" What is the thing that you fear ? " she asked, in a whisper.

" That you love some one else—even as I love you."

" It is not so. I love nobody—else—like that."

" Then tell me—for God's sake—do you care anything for me ? "

" Are you blind ? " she asked, turning her shoulder to him.

" Blind ? Heaven knows ! " he groaned. " Perhaps—for I sometimes think I see what is not so. I am a fool ; but I beg you to put me out of my foolishness."

Henry had continued his advance up the river during this conversation, and was now out of sight around a sharp bend.

" You must not—care for me," whispered the girl ; and though the voice was low and faint, the words rang in Limerick's ears like a cry. " You must not ! You must not ! For your own sake, you must not. And yet—I beg you not to go away from us—now. I am weak—Ned, I want your friendship. And I am glad you—care. Should you not care ! "

He took her firmly but gently by the shoulders and turned her so that she faced him squarely ; but

she hung her head so that he could not see her face. His hands trembled on her slender shoulders

"You want me to care?" he asked grimly.

"Yes," she breathed. "Since you do."

"You dislike me?"

"No."

"You like me?"

"Yes."

"You love me? Yes or no! You love me?"

"Yes. God forgive me. Yes."

He stooped quickly, caught her hands almost violently in both of his, and pressed them to his face. He kissed them, back, and palm, and fingers. She made no effort to withdraw them. As swiftly as he had stooped he stood straight, staring at her with gleaming eyes and a flushed face. His hands gripped her shoulders again, and he held her at arm's length. Her tear-brimming eyes met his for a heart-beat, then the lids slipped down, and the bright tears ran glittering on her cheeks. But she did not sob.

"Then why did you run away from me?—for I know now that you loved me even then," he asked. "And why am I not to tell you of my love? Why am I not to take you in my arms—and kiss you on the lips—now, to-morrow, next year, twenty years from now? You love me! I love you with every thought of my mind, every nerve of my body. I am unworthy and a fool; but most men are unworthy of a woman's love. Tell me why I am not to take you in my arms now—and marry you to-morrow? What is this thing that lies between us—this—this accursed mystery?"

He shook her gently, not knowing what he did.

"It is—disgrace," she said; but her voice broke and thinned on her lips, so that he could not hear the word.

CHAPTER XVI

ANOTHER ARRIVAL AT ROCKY RIVER

"DISGRACE," repeated Alice Wharton. "Black disgrace! Shame!"

Limerick was shocked and astonished—and bewildered. He did not doubt for a moment that she referred to his disgrace, his shame; and yet he was at a loss to know exactly what she had heard of him, and where—what lies and what truth. Did she know anything of his share in the punishment of Smith?—and if so, how?—and from whom? Or had that cad Grey told her some stories about him? But no, she had said that Grey had not mentioned him to her.

"What—in particular—have I done?" he asked huskily.

She opened her eyes wide with wonder, and stared at him.

"You?" she queried. "You? The disgrace and shame are not yours."

And yet he did not understand, but stared in bewilderment.

"You don't know who I am," she continued bravely. "When you know—then you'll understand—then you'll not want—to marry me."

A horrible suspicion singed Limerick's brain. Was it Henry? Were she and Henry *not* brother and sister? But how could he voice this thing?

"Are you married?" he asked dully. How else could he put it?

"Married!" she cried, with a considerable show of spirit. "You know better than that! I said *disgrace*. It is a family affair. My father's ruin—the ruin of himself and thousands of innocent persons, rich and poor—and our grief and shame. Oh, if you knew my name—you would know—and understand."

So she did not love another, and had never loved another. The shame was not her own. These facts were all that Limerick gathered from her words. He snatched them, caring nothing for any other information which her confession might contain. The glad blood leaped through him again, thrilling him to the tips of his fingers, brightening his frightened eyes, relaxing his haggard lips, reddening his face. He seized her in his arms.

"Ruin!" he cried. "Your father's disgrace! Girl, if you love me, how can those things wreck our lives? Why should your father's misfortunes keep you from me, or me from you? If you are unhappy, then your need for me is the greater. Your name! Dear God, what do I care for a name? It is you I want—the dearest girl in the world!"

She lay still in his embrace for a little while, her head on his shoulder, her eyes closed, her colourless, bright face exposed, unguarded. He lowered his head and touched his eager lips to hers; and at that the blood came back to her cheeks, and brow, and throat like a sunset tide. For a fraction of a second her lips answered his; and then her supple body straightened suddenly, and she darted from his arms —and at that moment Henry Wharton appeared.

Alice stood several paces away from Limerick, staring down at the toes of her brown boots. Limerick stood his ground, his arms still open, his face radiant, his whole air that of some young knight of old, who

had wandered into the lands of fairies and white magic, and there met with a potent enchantment. And Henry Wharton continued to advance upon them from the head of the pool, his eyes heavy with reproach, his face troubled and stern. He halted beside Alice, and touched her arm.

"What have you done?" he asked.

She did not move. She neither looked at him nor spoke.

"She has admitted it," said Ned Limerick, squaring his shoulders, and smiling upon Henry with enchanted eyes. Henry amused him. He was sorry for Henry. He pitied every other man in the world, for in all the wide world there was only one Alice Wharton. "She loves me," he continued, his voice ringing and trembling with the magic of the words. "If you don't like it, my boy, then I'm sorry for you. If you think you know of any reasons against her love for me, or mine for her, then take them away and bury them. She has told me all."

"All?" queried Henry, glancing at his sister.

"Not all," she whispered, without raising her face.

"It amounts to the same thing," said Limerick cheerily. "There is nothing she could tell me now that could matter. So step up, Henry, and congratulate me."

Henry stepped up; but he did not grasp the other's extended hand.

"Did she tell you her name?" he asked. "Our name?"

"No," replied Limerick, laughing. "If it isn't Wharton, then it may be Tudor, for all I know or care. Or it may be Skinner. A king's name or a butcher's name—what matter? It'll be Limerick in October. Now, Henry, shake hands—if you are

my friend. If you're not my friend, just say so—and you're forgiven on the spot."

"Of course, I'm your friend," replied young Wharton, with an effort to throw some cordiality into his voice.

So the two shook hands. But Henry looked uneasy and unhappy. He did not know Ned Limerick as he should have known him; and he did not know Percy Grey as well as he thought he did. The fact is, he had hoped that Percy Grey would win his sister. A youth of amazingly simple character, he had been strongly attracted to that cunning and highly polished man of the world. Grey knew the very name and nature of their disgrace, and yet had given them his friendship without an instant's hesitation. Grey was a friend tried and true—so it seemed to Henry. No doubt of the nature or quality of Grey's friendship had disturbed his honest mind for a moment. But Limerick's affection had not been put to the great test. And Percy Grey was a distinguished person, and older and wiser, and abler than Ned Limerick. He was a hero. He had made light of his own loss of a fabulous sum, in that disgraceful and disastrous crash. Even so, he was still possessed of untold wealth. Even in his worldly possessions, as in everything else, he overtopped poor Ned Limerick head and shoulders. The truth is, Henry had hoped that Alice would in time learn to look at Grey with his eyes, for he believed that Grey's love for her was entirely honourable. What would serve to give them back their lost place in the world so surely as Alice's marriage with Grey?—for all the world knew that Grey had been the heaviest sufferer. He thought of these things now; but he liked Ned Limerick, and so tried to look happy.

"I must go back to camp and see how Sol Gabe is doing," he said.

Limerick came out of his dream and looked like a man too suddenly awakened.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked nervously.

"The idiot was monkeying with a revolver last night, and shot himself in the wrist," replied Henry. "It is only a flesh wound, luckily."

"Shot himself?"

"So he says; and that's easier to believe than that some one else shot him—up in a place like this, in a law-abiding country."

"You are right," said Limerick. "I am sorry to hear of his accident; but if you need any help now, I'm your man. I can handle a canoe."

Henry thanked him gravely and departed. Ned turned to Alice.

"I can scarcely believe it," he said. "Henry doesn't seem pleased; but he'll warm up to it after a while. May I—kiss you again?"

"And you do not ask my real name?" she said.

"Why should I—if you do not like it?" he returned. "You may tell me when you want to—or never, if it suggests unpleasantness to you. I am not curious about it, dear, for I know all that I want to—that you are mine; but I must tell you that I think you take this thing you consider a family disgrace too serious, whatever it is."

"My father was dishonest and dishonourable," she said.

"By your standards, dear."

"By the world's standards, Ned. It was a public disgrace."

"Confound the world!" he cried, and caught her in his arms.

Limerick was in no condition for reflection. All this talk of disgrace served only to excite his pity and intensify his love for Alice. As a subject of serious consideration, it went off his mind like spray off a gull's breast. He had no time, just then, even to wonder about it. Life was too short for anything unimportant and unpleasant, now that she had confessed her love for him.

The lovers wandered into camp and found Henry and Sol Gabe sitting moody and unemployed. The Maliseet looked up at Limerick with a masklike face, relieved only by a swift flicker of the eyelids. Young Wharton stared gloomily at his sister.

"I am sorry to hear of your accident, Sol Gabe," said Limerick.

"Dern fool accident," admitted the Maliseet. "Clean pistol, see. Dern fool pistol, anyhow. He go off too damn quick and hit me."

"You must be more careful in the future," said the other sternly. "You might have hurt yourself seriously, or shot some one else. My advice to you is to leave revolvers alone after this. Where is it, by the way?"

"Thrown him away," said Sol. "Git mad an' throw him away."

"Sol Gabe is just a big baby," said Alice; "and I am quite sure that though he may hurt himself sometimes, he would never, by any chance, hurt any one else. Isn't that so, Sol?"

"Guess so," replied the guide. "Don't wanter hurt nobody, you bet."

And as he made this statement he shot a quick and shamefaced glance at Limerick.

Ned Limerick lunched with the Whartons, and wandered downstream with them in the afternoon,

fishing. Those were golden hours. Alice seemed to forget the shadow of the mysterious disgrace. Even Henry behaved very much like the old friend of Pont Levoy. Ned left them at their tents at four o'clock, and set out on his homeward journey. Though his feet frequently splashed in shallow water, his spirits soared in a sunshine such as he had never before seen in the valley of Rocky River. Smith was forgotten. Percy Grey was forgotten. Fear was dead. He had covered half the distance between the Whartons' camp and Pierre McAvity's cabin when he was suddenly confronted by Sue McAvity. The girl's dusky cheeks glowed red, and her black eyes flashed. It was easy to see that she was in a royal temper; and Limerick halted and smiled good-naturedly.

"Who's that girl?" demanded the young woman of many and inferior breeds. "I seen you with her. Who is she?"

The smile of good nature faded from Limerick's face and his eyes hardened. He stepped forward and tried to pass Sue, but she seized him by the arm, and placed herself directly in front of him.

"Who is she?" she demanded angrily. "I seen ye. I'm up to yer tricks, mister. I reckon 'twas yerself brought her here."

"May I ask, Susan, what business it is of yours?" returned Ned.

The big, full-blooded young woman began to tremble at that, with rage and, perhaps, a little with other emotions. Her hand fell from Ned's arm; and he passed her quickly and continued upstream. She turned and overtook him in a moment, and clutched at the back of his coat.

"*She* ain't nothin' to look at!" she cried. "Why'd ye bring a white-faced cat like her all the way to

Rocky River ? She ain't even as good lookin' as that there Mitchell girl—yer other girl."

Limerick turned upon her with the very devil glimmering in his eyes.

"Never venture to speak to me again of Miss Wharton, unless you speak respectfully," he said, in a low voice. "And the same of Ellen May. Understand me!"

The girl began to weep violently. She tried to slip her arm about his neck. Horrified and embarrassed, he avoided her and fairly took to his heels. He reached the cabin in a towering rage, and found Pierre and the boys at home. Upon them he vented his just indignation; but before he had actually come to blows with the sullen but bewildered Pierre, Sue arrived, and begged his pardon very humbly. So peace was restored.

CHAPTER XVII

A PICNIC AT OTTER FALLS

LIMERICK went out into the moonlight, thinking over the unexpected meeting with Alice. Of late he had grown more bitter and become almost despairing of ever knowing happiness again, for the more he saw of Smith the more horrible his mutilation seemed. If only he had taken no part in that crime! That now, when his spirits were at so low an ebb, Alice herself should appear in the woods, seemed to him more of a dream than reality.

Quite unaware of the pace at which he was moving, while all these thoughts perplexed him, he suddenly found himself at the Mitchells' house, and was surprised to hear some one singing. The voice was sweet, though untrained—the voice of Ellen May. The song was an old one, fragrant with very correct and somewhat insipid early Victorian sentimentality. He had not expected this of Ellen May—this moonlight singing of a love-song—and for a second he felt a slight uneasiness and was conscious of a vague questioning within him. He found her on the veranda, alone. She was startled by his appearance at that late hour, and frankly told him so. He replied, as frankly, that he had come by accident, or perhaps by habit.

"I was just walking, and I didn't notice where I was heading for," he explained. "I was thinking of other things. The fact is, Ellen May, the most extra-

ordinary thing has happened. I've just come across two friends of mine—great friends—very dear friends—camping on this river. I've looked for them everywhere—everywhere but on Rocky River—and now they have come to Rocky River. Isn't it amazing ? "

Ellen May agreed with him that the thing was amazing. She was keenly interested. She noted the agitation in his voice.

" So few people come to Rocky River," she said. And then, " Are your friends sportsmen ? "

" They fish, and that sort of thing," replied Ned. " That is what they have come for, I imagine. One is a girl. The other is her brother."

" A girl ? " repeated Ellen May.

" Yes—not much older than you, I think," said Limerick. " You'll like her ; and she will like you. She is—ah, very charming."

Ellen May was young and fine and human ; so it scarcely need be written that she was romantic. She became suddenly conscious of a vague indescribable sensation of vacancy, of loneliness, in her breast, as though her tender heart-strings had been struck until they ached. She had felt the same many times, as a small child, when her mother had denied her some childish whim—an unreasonable sense of ill-use, of desertion. She knew now that it was unreasonable and childish. She told herself so. Why should she consider herself to be unfairly used by the world in general because one of these two people from the great world happened to be a woman, and young, and charming ? Why should it hurt her to hear Mr. Limerick say that the strange girl was charming ? Why, indeed ? She could not answer the question. She did not love Ned Limerick. She cared for him only as a friend—as a gentle, clever, attractive, amicable friend.

"I hope you will be very nice to these people," said Limerick. "It would mean a great deal to them, Ellen May—for they are not altogether happy. I have known them for some time—and never have seen them really happy—really gay."

Ellen May was touched.

"I'll try to cheer them, of course; but how can I, who know nothing of—of the things they know and care for—help them at all if they are sad?"

The young man smiled at her very tenderly. "My dear girl, you seem to me the very spirit of happiness," he replied. "Of happiness—yes, and the soul of understanding," he added.

The girl was silent, wondering what he meant. She felt at once pensive and pleasurably curious.

Ned produced a cigarette, and lit it. He glanced at her across the tiny flame of the match and met her bright, soft glance.

"May I tell you?" he said, speaking swiftly. "We are good friends, I think—you and I. You have been amazingly kind to me, and—and I depend a lot on your friendship. May I tell you the story?"

"Please do," whispered the girl.

So Ned told her the whole romantic story of his love for Alice Wharton. Ellen May was enchanted, bewildered, excited, and saddened by the story. She could not speak to him at the conclusion of it, but she gave him both her slim, strong hands in his. He created dire confusion in her blood and heart by stooping and touching his lips to her fingers. Then he thanked her briefly for her understanding, wished her good night, and went away.

The girl sat on the veranda for another half-hour, then entered the house noiselessly and went noiselessly to bed, comforting herself with the fact that

she did not love Ned Limerick. So sure was she of this fact that she said it to herself over and over.

Before breakfast Ellen May told her mother all that Ned Limerick had told her. Mrs. Mitchell, it seems, had pictured quite another romance for Master Ned, deep in a hidden place in her heart; but she looked into her daughter's eyes and saw her mistake. Despite a sheen of tears in those clear eyes, she saw more deeply and surely into Ellen May's heart than Ellen May herself could see.

"He is a pleasant young man," she said, "and I am glad he has found the young lady at last. It is all very romantic and mysterious; and I am fond of romance—and of mystery, too, so long as it is not tragic—like the mystery of poor Mr. Smith. I wonder what these young people are like? I hope they are not stuck-up and airified."

"They are Ned's friends, mother—and he is not stuck-up," said Ellen May.

"Really well-bred people never are," replied Mrs. Mitchell, with something of her old, school-marm air. "They can see true worth, true refinement, even in the most humble surroundings."

She beat the batter for the pancakes violently, but absent-mindedly.

"I'm sure they will be very pleasant," she continued, pouring three white circles of batter on the hot griddle. "I hope we may see a great deal of them while they are on the river It is a great satisfaction to me to meet and talk to people who know books and the world. I wonder what the young man is like."

Ellen May said nothing. She had wondered, too.

"Did Sol Gabe bring them upriver?" asked Mrs. Mitchell, as she inserted a long knife beneath one of

the spluttering cakes and turned it over with a knowing flip of the wrist.

"Yes," said Ellen May. "They want to fish, Ned says."

"Well," said her mother, in a tone of decision, "they'll fish if they want to. I'm fond of fishing, myself. And if we find them to be the pleasant, unairified young people I hope they are, I'll go fishing with them."

The girl was astonished. She looked at her mother for more.

"I'll arrange everything," continued the capable woman. "It'll be a rest for us. We'll go up to Otter Falls and live in shacks, and let Sol Gabe do all the cooking. If these young strangers are lonely, then our company will be a blessing to them; and my being of the party will make it so's Ned Limerick can be with this Miss Alice of his most of the time without offending any one's sense of the proprieties. I was never one to neglect the proprieties even in the woods."

"But we don't have to go camping to go fishing," said Ellen May.

"But we do to get away from the cooking," retorted her mother. "I want a change. You'll say I might let Sol Gabe come in here and cook for me—but you'd be wrong. I'd never eat Sol Gabe's messes in my own house, nor let him mess up my own kitchen; but when you are camping you don't feel so particular."

Ned Limerick appeared at the farmhouse later in the day, accompanied by Alice and Henry Wharton. Mrs. Mitchell "sized them up in a flash," as she expressed it, and suggested the trip to Otter Falls without loss of time. The idea seemed to impress every

one favourably. Dan Mitchell could not make head nor tail of it, 'tis true; but as he only asked to be left comfortably at home, and offered no objection to his wife's whim, his opinion did not matter one way or another. Mrs. Mitchell wanted to explain the matter to Smith and ask him to do the cooking for himself and Dan during her short holiday—but no Smith could be found, high or low.

The party started upstream early next morning, in three canoes; and, shortly after the departure Smith appeared at the house. He found Dan in the kitchen, gulping a last cup of coffee.

"Hullo!" exclaimed the woodsman. "Where you bin? I was jist fixin' up to set out alookin' for ye. I wasn't frettin' none myself about ye, for I guess you know yer way about; but Ellen May made me promise to hunt for ye an' to follow her upstream this very day an' tell her if I couldn't find ye. I'm danged glad ye come. Set down and have yer breakfast."

The silent one smiled, wagged his head, and sat down at the table. Dan stared at him inquiringly.

"Ye look kinder excited," he said.

The other shook his head and helped himself to half-cold pancakes. He lowered his eyes to his plate then raised them again to the woodsman; and Dan saw a new light in their depths—a softer, yet a more pitiful light than he had ever seen there before. The thing embarrassed him.

"Ye gotter do the cookin' whilst they're away," he said. "She says so. She don't set much store by my cookin'—an' never did—an' no more does Ellen May. But they won't be gone long."

Smith put butter and molasses on his pancakes.

"I guess somethin's bit the wimmin," continued Dan. "Campin'! It's all these here city folk

that's upset 'em, I reckon—an' away they go with these here young Whartons, leavin' me and you to cook for ourselves, at our time of life."

Smith looked a question.

"Otter Falls," said the woodsman. "They've took Sol Gabe along—an' Ned Limerick."

Then he got up and left the house. Smith ate his breakfast slowly, reflectively, then cleared the dishes from the table, washed them and put them away. He then lit his pipe, packed a haversack with bread, biscuits, and cheese, and went to the open door. Dan was nowhere in sight. He slipped the strap of the haversack over his head and left the house.

When Dan Mitchell returned to the house at noon, Smith was not there, and there was no fire in the stove. Dan dined on cold pie, and felt very low-spirited. Smith did not return for supper, nor at bedtime, nor next day. Dan considered himself to be greatly ill-used by his family and friends, and would certainly have deserted the house, too, but for the work to be done and the livestock to be tended. He was very lonely. Otter Falls seemed a thousand miles away to him. As a matter of fact, it was only five miles away. He wondered if his wife was enjoying herself—and hoped that she was not.

Smith was the first member of the household to make an appearance. He walked into the kitchen at the noon-hour, with an empty haversack at his side, and smiled at the ill-used householder, who was eating very wet boiled potatoes and ill-fried salt pork. His smile was less bitter than usual.

"So there you are," said Dan, trying to hide his satisfaction.

Smith went into the sitting-room, only to return within the minute with paper and pencil. He wrote:

"They are all coming home to-night. I have been at Otter Falls, but they don't know. I was curious about the strangers. Don't mention the fact that I followed them to any one. The Whartons are O.K. Do all that you can for them. The young man, Henry, pulled your daughter out of the falls yesterday —saved her life. He is very fond of Ellen May, I think."

Dan read and reread the words.

"That so," he said, at last. "Saved Ellen May's life, did he. Good for him. Gittin' sweet on her, is he? Well, if he's good enough for Ellen May then he must be a danged good young feller—but I ain't goin' to stand for any foolin'."

Smith took the paper and wrote eagerly. "I used to know him. You can trust him. But don't tell any one I used to know those two."

"I'll keep my mouth shut," promised Dan. And then, "Well, thank heaven they're comin' home, anyhow!"

The party returned that night; but Smith was not on hand to receive them. Sol Gabe established the Whartons in their old camping-place before dark, and Ned Limerick went immediately to the McAvitys' cabin, arriving there in time for supper. He found Sue sulky and the rest of the family inquisitive; but he didn't care. He was happy.

CHAPTER XVIII

NED LIMERICK UNDERSTANDS

After supper Limerick smoked cigarettes in the clearing between the cabin and the river. He was disturbed, just after the fall of dusk, by some one who scrambled up the bank and approached him.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Well met, Ned Limerick," returned the voice of Percy Grey.

The cigarette dropped from Limerick's fingers. He stumbled to his feet, and stared dully at the man who had made a tool, a fool, and a monster of him nearly a year ago. They had parted, last year, on what might pass as friendly terms; and now Ned itched to smash the polished Mr. Grey somewhere in the vicinity of the polished jaw.

"Is it you, Grey?" he managed to ask in a steady voice.

"It's myself, Ned," replied the other. "My guide is in camp about five miles below here. I've had a beastly walk. Can you give me a drink of something better than Black Rock gin or Rocky River water?"

"Come in," said Limerick heavily. "I'm living with a new settler and his family. I have some very fair Scotch in my room."

He led the way into his small and unadorned chamber, and lit a lamp.

"You haven't written a line to me," said Grey, "so I take it that Mr. X is still here somewhere, alive, but harmless."

"Yes, he was picked up by a very decent family living about three miles above here," replied Limerick. "He is still with them."

He produced a bottle of whisky and a glass, and got fresh spring water from the kitchen. Grey poured a long drink and tossed it down.

"That goes to the spot," he said. "And now suppose we shake hands. It is a long time since we last met."

Limerick's face went red as fire, but his eyes met Grey's boldly.

"Sorry, Grey, but that's exactly what I don't intend to do," he said. "You may as well know it now as later. You talked me into acting like a savage—worse than a savage—and I've had plenty of time, since then, to think it over. I'll not shake hands with you any more readily than I'd shake hands with myself. You told me the truth about Smith, but you didn't tell me the truth about yourself."

Percy Grey smiled. It was not a pleasant smile. He turned his gaze from Limerick to the bottle at last, with his lips still twisted

"Do you think you are wise to assume this attitude of virtue with me?" he asked politely

"Do you threaten me?" asked Ned.

"Not at all. I'm simply asking you a simple question," said Grey.

"It was a dirty and cowardly revenge," said Limerick slowly. "Your hired assistant, Knoxley, has evidently received his just reward—not exactly what he expected, I imagine. He has not been seen on the river. My own opinion is that Smith knows something about him; and, by the same token, I wouldn't stand too long beside a lighted window, if I were you. Your victim has an uncomfortable habit of wandering

about at all hours of the night, with a revolver—and though you cut off his right hand, he has become very clever with his left."

Grey changed colour and stepped aside into a shadowy corner. The other grinned scornfully, and Grey winced. But he stayed in the corner.

"Then why hasn't he shot you before now?" he asked.

"He knows me," replied Limerick bitterly. "He knows me for nothing worse than a poor, weak, gullible, damn fool. There you have it."

"So it seems," sneered the other. "You two are warm friends, then?"

"I should hardly call it a warm friendship; but each knows the worst of the other, and for the moment there is peace between us. For my part, I'll never again lift a hand against the poor devil."

"Very pretty. You show a beautiful nature. And may I ask the cause of all this love and charity? I may reform myself."

"I am sorry for him—and, perhaps, he is sorry for me."

Grey looked keenly and wickedly at the younger man.

"There are some strangers just below here," he said. "I passed their tents on my way up. Do you know them? Who are they?"

"They are the people you sent here," replied Limerick. "Wharton is the name, as you know. They are old friends of mine. I knew them last winter in France. They are not expecting you on Rocky River."

"You knew them last winter?"

"Yes, very well. Miss Wharton has promised to marry me, in October."

The wick of the little lamp was narrow and foul, and the chimney was smoked. Ned Limerick's face was in the shadow above the lamp, and Grey stood in a dim corner. Each could see the other's eyes and the blurred mask of the face. That was all. They were silent for half a minute, staring, striving to get a clear view each of the other. The younger man felt that his bold declaration had scored on the other. He expected a violent retort, even a physical one. He waited, alert, glad that he had blurted out the glorious truth, and warm for a fight; for he knew Grey well enough to guess something of his reason for having sent the Whartons to Rocky River, and following them himself. But he felt that there was still something sinister that he did not know. He was ready for anything—eager for it.

Instead of jumping at him, Grey laughed; but there was no mirth in his laughter. He choked it off as suddenly as he had started it.

"You are an enterprising young man," he said. "Has papa given his consent to the most suitable and romantic union?"

"What are you driving at?" asked Limerick, shaken by a chill of nameless alarm. "Her father? He is dead, I think."

"I thought as much," replied Grey, with a note of relief in his voice. "No wonder you call yourself a fool, Limerick. You are not fit to be without a nurse. The match you contemplate is one that would be very pleasing to your people, I imagine. Oh, you idiot! You will bless that day that I returned to Rocky River as long as you live. So you meant to marry Wilbur Smith's daughter, did you. My hat!"

Then Ned knew, and he wondered dizzily how he

had been so blind. Alice was Smith's daughter! This was the disgrace of which she had spoken. Yes, it was disgrace enough, heaven knows! This was her reason for running away from him in France. His heart melted with pity for her, a pity so keen that the tears sprang to his eyes. And Grey had known this when he sent the two to Rocky River. He had pretended friendship for them—and love for the girl, beyond a doubt—and had sent them to Rocky River! And now he had followed them.

"Have they met yet—the father and children?" asked Grey.

Limerick did not answer just then. He was thinking; and it is hard to think when one's brain is surging with hot blood, and one's heart is torn with love, pity, hate, and horror. He put his hands on the edge of the little table, and stared blindly down at them. He tried to get his thoughts clear. Grey knew. He recommended Rocky River to Alice and Henry. Knowing that Alice wanted to get away from him, he told her that he had to remain in Europe all summer. And now he was here. He had sent them to see their father—tongueless and handless.

"Have they discovered one another yet?" repeated Grey.

Still Limerick was silent. God, it was hard to think! But now, at last, it was all coming clear. Alice had turned Grey down. That was it, of course. And Grey had sent them to Rocky River. What was Grey's game?

"It's a shock to you, of course," said Grey. "She's an attractive girl—one of the most attractive I've ever seen; but as a wife—well, as a man of the world yourself, you see my objections to marrying her—and now your own, as well."

Limerick lifted his hands from the table, looked at them, and noted the veins on their backs swollen like cords. He wondered at them dully. He swayed on his feet for a moment, then walked slowly around the small table and into the corner where Grey stood with a smile on his lips. He suddenly shot out his hands, grasping the man of the world by the throat and the shoulder. With a rush of strength quite beyond anything he had ever exhibited before, he hurled the other across the room, and against the door. The door flew open, outward, and Grey reeled into the family circle in the kitchen. Limerick was after him like a panther. Susan screamed. Pierre and the boys gaped in astonishment, but did not move from their chairs.

The kitchen door stood open to the summer night. Grey did not go clean out of it the first time, but struck the frame violently with his head, and fell to the floor; but Limerick snatched him up and hurled him into the clearing at the second throw. Grey scrambled to his feet and ran; but the furious Limerick overtook him at the top of the steep bank and sent him rolling into the bushes with a blindly delivered, but well-placed, kick. Before Limerick could follow up, he was smothered by the McAvitys. It seemed to him that every member of that robust family had two arms around his neck and two around his legs. They made no attempt to hurt him, or even to throw him—they just embraced him. He struggled for a moment, then leaned, limp and breathless, in those enfolding arms.

"Hell!" exclaimed Pierre. "Ye're clean off yer head, mister. Who is he? What was ye tryin' to murder him for? I don't give a hang if ye kill him, but I don't wanter see ye git into no trouble with the law."

Sue was weeping noisily and clinging desperately to such portions of the young man as she could reach. Mrs. McAvity was swearing excitedly.

"Let me go," said Limerick. "I'll not murder him; and the chances are that I'll not even hit him again to-night. He has too long a start on me. Thanks for your thoughtfulness, all of you."

They dropped their arms from him.

"Who is he?" asked Pierre. "Never saw him afore on this river. You was sure wipin' things up with him, boss. What's the scrap about?"

Limerick seated himself on the nearest stump, and produced and lit a cigarette. The family clustered eagerly about him, Sue to the fore.

"That man's name is Grey," said Limerick. "He is the worst man you ever saw, any of you. He is a skunk. I didn't know what a skunk he was until to-night. Then I went for him. He is camping about five miles downriver. He got there to-night, so he says. That's all I can tell you."

"Sport?" asked one of the boys.

"No, he is not a sportsman," said Limerick sneeringly; "but he's rich, if that's what you mean. He is rotten with money. Now go to bed, please, and don't mess with my affairs. I promise not to kill him."

The family retired, grumbling a little, and still full of questions. Ned continued to sit on the stump for a few minutes, cooling off from that hot inner storm, and collecting his thoughts. Upon cool consideration, the fact that Alice was the daughter of that dishonourable old rascal, Smith, was terrible to him for her sake, and for his own, only in relation to his share of the cowardly maiming of the man. Had he loved her less he might have considered his relatives' feelings in the

matter; but he loved her utterly. And she had acted honourably. She had tried to escape from him. She had tried to warn him. She *had* warned him, as far as he would permit her to. As for Grey—well, he knew all that he wanted to of that cad's game.

Limerick decided to go to the Wharton's camp—he continued to think of them by that name—and find out if Grey had visited them yet. He would warn them as well as he could without mentioning Smith. He started down the bank, but had not gone five paces along the river before he was halted by the guarded voice of Ellen May Mitchell.

"We are both here," whispered the girl. "Mr. Smith and I. He wants you to remember your promise to him."

The narrow valley of the river was in a half darkness. The girl and Smith came out of the shadows, and stood close to Limerick.

"I'll keep my promise," he said; "but let us move along. My friends here are awkwardly curious."

The three moved downstream in silence for about a hundred yards.

"And he wants to thank you for throwing Grey out of the house and down the bank—and for what you said to him," said Ellen May. "It was splendid. We saw and heard it all. Oh, it was fine! I did not know that you knew his children."

"I did not know who they were," replied Limerick frankly. "Now that I know, I do not care." He turned to Smith. "Yes, I care for their sakes," he corrected himself, "and for my own sake inasmuch as I had a hand in the maiming of you. How am I to explain that to her?"

"She would forgive you, as *he* has forgiven you," said Ellen May.

"But what are we to do?" asked Limerick. "Grey will injure us if he can. I don't know how. He may be at their camp even now, telling lies."

"I don't think he will show himself to them for some days," said the girl. "You must have marked him badly. Mr. Smith is only afraid now that Grey will discover him to his children, and so show them the full extent of his shame—and theirs. He cannot bring the police. He cannot force Alice to believe him, now that she cares for you. He can only add to their sense of shame—and break the father's heart."

"Then we must keep them from seeing him or knowing that he is here."

"Yes, he wants them to think that he is dead, and so forget him; but he does not want them to go away from Rocky River just yet. But he has given me his promise that he will not kill Grey."

A chill went down Limerick's spine at that; and yet he knew that if ever a man deserved killing, it was Percy Grey.

"I am glad of that," he said, steadily enough. "You heard me warn Grey, perhaps. The best thing I can do is to go down to their camp now and tell them Grey is here, and that I assaulted him. Perhaps I had better tell Alice, frankly, why I attacked him. You heard him advise me not to marry her—yes, and hint that he had refused to marry her. Henry may not believe me. He is deeply impressed with Grey."

"Tell them all the truth that you know, except that their father is here, or was ever here. Grey told you who they are," replied Ellen.

They moved down the dark valley, Limerick ahead. They had gone twenty yards or so when a revolver cracked in the bushes just in front of them, spitting forth a splinter of red flame, and Limerick stumbled

with a grunt, and fell on his hands and knees. Before he could scramble to his feet again, Ellen May had stepped over him, whipped a revolver from somewhere about her short skirts, and silenced the fire in the bushes with four shots in as many seconds.

Ned Limerick stood staring around him for a second or two, then began to sway.

"I'm hit somewhere," he said calmly. "Confound the luck!"

Smith jumped to him, and slipped an arm about him.

"That was Grey, I suppose," said the girl. "I hope I killed the sneak. Where are you hit, Mr. Limerick?"

"I feel blood on my face—and a hot spot on the side of my head," replied the young man. "Scalp wound, surely—else I'd be dead by now."

"We must take you back to McAvity's," said Ellen May.

They were afraid to strike a match, because of the man who had fired upon them, who might still be lurking in the bushes. Limerick investigated the condition of his head with his finger-tips, fearfully and cautiously at first, but soon with a better assurance. It was only a scalp wound, after all; but with his fingers on it, and the warm and sticky blood creeping down his temple and cheek, he thought of the nature of the wound if the bullet had been only half an inch to the right—or even a quarter of an inch. This thought unnerved him for a moment, and came near to upsetting his stomach; but he recovered his composure quickly.

"The best thing I can do is to tie my head up in something and go on down to the Whartons' camp. They must be warned," he said.

"We shall go with you, then," said Ellen May,

"and wait outside, in the dark. Grey may take another shot at you."

She bound Limerick's head in a couple of handkerchiefs. They reached the camp without further accident. The fire had fallen low, and the sister and brother had retired to their tents. Limerick advanced alone toward the feeble glow of the fire, and was suddenly confronted by Sol Gabe. The Maliseet had his right hand in a sling.

"What happen to yer head?" he asked, kicking the fire into a blaze.

"Hurt it," replied Limerick. "I want to speak to the Whartons."

"How you hurt it?" asked Gabe suspiciously. "You bin fightin' ag'in with Smith, maybe?"

"Who's there?" asked Henry Wharton, crawling from his tent.

"Ned," said Limerick, "I want to speak to you and Alice."

Then Alice appeared from her tent, in a blanket dressing-gown, her hair in long braids down her back. She came straight to the fire and looked at her lover with startled eyes—and no wonder, for he had not washed the blood from his face, and there was blood on the untidy bandage which slanted above his left eye.

"You are hurt!" she cried. "Is it serious?"

"Only a furrow across my scalp, dear," he said. "I'm as right as rain. Sorry to disturb you at this time of night, and frighten you into the bargain; but I've come to tell you that Percy Grey is on the river."

"Grey!" exclaimed Henry joyfully. "When did he come?"

"But he said that he could not come!" cried Alice indignantly.

CHAPTER XIX

SUE McAVITY'S CHANGE OF HEART

"He arrived to-day, so he says," replied Limerick, "and made camp a few miles below here. He must have passed here a couple of hours ago, on his way to visit me. We had a row. I kicked him out of McAvity's cabin and down the bank. I started out to tell you about him, and some one took a shot at me from the bushes and scratched my scalp."

Even Sol Gabe became excited at that, for he was by nature a man of peace, and the way things had been shaping of late on Rocky River was beginning to wear on his nerves. Alice seized one of Ned's hands.

"But who did it?" she asked. "Who shot you? Not Percy Grey?"

"That is an unjust suspicion!" exclaimed Henry angrily. "It is unworthy of you to suggest it, Ned. Grey is the last man in the world to shoot at a man from ambush—or in any other way You say that you kicked him out of McAvity's cabin. What the devil was that for?"

"That is what I have come to tell you," replied Limerick.

"Something to Grey's discredit, I'll be bound," retorted Henry.

"Yes," replied the other crisply. "He was astonished to hear that we three are old friends. He was still more astonished to hear that you and I are to be married this autumn, Alice. Then he told me that you are the children of Wilbur Smith."

"He told you that?" cried Henry Wharton. "No! You wormed it out of him. Ned Limerick, you're not the man I used to think you."

"And what then?" asked Alice tremulously, slipping her hand from his. "Did you believe him?"

"Yes; and he seemed to think it would make a difference in—our plans, dear—so I threw him out. That is what I came for—to warn you. He will be here himself as soon as his face is presentable, no doubt." He turned to Henry. "And it's up to you, my boy, to look after your sister. You've been fooled once, like many another; but don't be fooled again. Grey is a dangerous man."

Then he turned to Alice and extended his arms to her. She hesitated for a moment, then slipped into his embrace, sank her face against his shoulder, and sobbed with mingled joy, and relief, and shame. Henry came close to them and stared into Limerick's face with awakened eyes.

"In that case," he said huskily, "the fellow is a liar and a cad. He suggested that you should not marry her? Damn him, he wanted to marry her himself!"

"He is all that you say, and worse," replied Limerick. "He told me that he refused to marry her! Get that? Refused to marry her! So I knocked him about; and I think I should have killed him if Pierre and the others had not overpowered me. That is the cur we must protect her from."

"Protect her!" cried Henry, transformed with horror and rage. "By God, I'll kill him!"

He wanted to go out immediately in search of Grey, with Sol Gabe's revolver; and the others had difficulty in restraining him. At last they talked him into a state of comparative reason, and he somewhat

reluctantly relinquished the idea of using a revolver on Grey.

"I'll treat him as you did, Ned," he said. "But you spoke of protection? What harm can he do Alice, now that we both know him for the cad that he really is?"

"Don't underrate him," cautioned the other. "He is as clever as he is evil. He is rich—and who knows to what damnable use he may put his wealth? Don't move against him. Wait for him—and know that every word he says is a lie."

Alice washed and bound Limerick's scalp wound properly. They would not hear of his starting back to Pierre McAvity's that night, so he shared Henry's tent.

I must go back to Grey. It was he who had fired the shot that had grazed Limerick's skull. The four shots from Ellen May's revolver had gone wide, but had served their purpose by frightening him. After that he lay quiet among the bushes for a long time, shaken with terror—for he was a coward—and suffering keenly from the results of Limerick's violent handling. But he was not a quitter. The complications which he had discovered so painfully—the affair between Alice and Ned Limerick—did not turn him from his original intention. He had come to Rocky River to get Alice, and he still meant to get her. The game was not yet played. He would discover Smith to Alice and Henry, and then bring them to heel with threats of the law. It would all come straight in the end; but at the moment he felt very sick and sore, and faint with fear of the bullets that had hummed so close to him.

Grey soon heard splashings in the shallow water and swishings in the alders, and he knew that the revolver shots had brought out the family with whom Limerick

made his home. He thought fast. He had seen these people for a moment, and his guide had told him something about them. He had money in his pocket; he needed friends on the river; the only sort of friends he knew of were the friends one buys with money. He reasoned quickly, then raised a shout. Susan was the first to find him; and Limerick's mention of this stranger's wealth was still lively in her mind. She carried a lantern. She held it close to his face, and examined him with her black and daring eyes. She admired what she saw; and so did he, with reservations. Grey had many sides to his nature, and all were bad; but he had also many tastes, some of which were good. He could see charms in Susan to which Ned Limerick had been blind.

"Are ye shot, mister?" she asked. "Who fired at ye, anyhow?"

"He didn't hit me," said Grey, "though he fired four shots. I fired one, you see. It was your friend Limerick, I imagine." He showed her his revolver, with one chamber empty. It would be useless to lie about that. "But he knocked me about," he continued. "He was on top of me before I could defend myself—and he got me on the run."

"He sure did knock ye about," said Sue, flashing her teeth.

Then Pierre arrived on the scene. The three talked back and forth for several minutes. Grey showed some money and remarked that he was willing to pay well for such accommodations as those supplied to Limerick. He proved it by handing over twenty dollars to Pierre.

"But I won't stand for no murderin' on this river," said Pierre. "Don't hanker to hev the police a-huntin' round this part of the country."

Pierre had a past, it seems. Grey calmed his fears, and presently they all set out for the cabin. After a drink of Ned Limerick's whisky all round, Grey retired to Limerick's bed. Several hours later, in the blackest hour before the dawn, Pierre went five miles downstream, and, according to Grey's instructions, paid off Grey's guide, and sent man, canoe, and outfit back to the village at the mouth of the river.

Ned Limerick arrived at Pierre's cabin at seven o'clock the next morning, in fine spiritual and physical condition, and with his head neatly bandaged. The family met him at the door.

"Ye can't come in, boss," said Pierre, staring down at his feet. "We got a new boarder."

Limerick stared for a moment, then began to laugh. He was not sorry to be quit of that dwelling-place. He glanced inquiringly at Sue, and the young woman blushed furiously and tossed her head.

"Grey, I suppose?" he queried. "Well, I wish you luck with him. But I must trouble you to pass out my rods, and books, and kit. How does your new boarder feel this morning, by the way?"

"Reckon he feels purty fair," replied the settler. "I dasn't git yer outfit now, fer he's asleep. Ye beat him crool las' night."

"I didn't give him half what he deserved," replied Ned cheerfully. "Just wake him up, will you, and hand out my stuff; and tell him that if he tries any more of his stinking tricks, and if he shoots at me again from cover, he'll get into trouble. Never mind. I'll speak to him myself."

"No, ye don't!" cried Pierre sullenly; and the whole family took post in front of the door. Sue seemed the most determined and indignant of the defenders. She flourished a stick of stove wood.

"I'll send for my things," said Limerick, smiling at them all. He was greatly relieved at finding Sue against him. "Tell your friend that I called, will you?—and what I said."

He lit a cigarette and returned to the bed of the river, leaving the family clustered in the door, and Percy Grey sitting bolt upright in his narrow bed, with a revolver cocked in his hand, and a beastly expression on his bruised face—for Grey had heard all, and had feared another assault from the youth who had been his tool so short a time before.

Limerick went upstream, for he felt that his first duty was to communicate with Smith. He found Dan Mitchell in a potato patch in front of the house. The fine fellow looked worried.

"Ain't this hell entirely?" he queried, leaning on his hoe. "Did ye ever hear the like of it? Smith ain't makin' any secret about it; and even if he was, he couldn't fool Ellen May."

"It's the devil, and no mistake," returned Limerick. "Where is he now? I want to know exactly what his game is. We must work together."

"He's away again," said the farmer. "He came home about two o'clock, an' was off again afore sunup. He jist ha'nts them two children of his—an' scart to death all the time they'll catch a sight of him. He an' Ellen May was out till two las' night; an' now she's asleep, an' he's still moochin' around. I'm downright sorry for Smith, I am—an' so is Eliza. He's give us his sacred word he won't kill Grey—not on this river, anyhow. That's somethin'. I'd kill the skunk as quick as I set eyes onto him, if I was him."

"Ellen May has had a fine influence on him," said Limerick; "and he is considering the interests of his children. You have all had a good influence on him.

Life on Rocky River has shown him the error of his ways, I think—and it has shown me the error of mine."

Dan Mitchell eyed him narrowly. "You was mixed up in it, too, was you?" he asked.

"Hasn't he told you about me?" asked Limerick. "How much do you know, anyway? How much does your daughter know?"

"Ellen May is smart," said Dan. "She knows most of Smith's story, I'm thinkin', what with guessin' at it and bein' told by himself. That poor feller sets great store by Ellen May—and so he did from the very first. Here she comes."

Limerick left the farmer and advanced to meet the girl. Her eyes looked tired; but otherwise she showed no signs of her night of vigil. She greeted him cordially, and inquired almost tenderly after his head. He told her that he had spent the night at the Whartons' camp, and had returned to McAvity's in the morning, only to find his room occupied by Grey; also, he told her that Grey had not been hit by any of the four shots, but was suffering from bruised limbs and face.

"We must frighten him out of the country," she said, "or poor Smith may not be able to withstand the temptation of shooting him. He has changed greatly since he first came here; but he has still got a terrible temper. We must drive Grey out of the country before he has time to do any more harm, or get himself shot. Fortunately, Mr. Smith has no time for anything but spying upon his son and daughter. It is pitiful to see him looking out at them from the bushes. He would rather die than have them see him as he is; and yet he will not keep away from them, and he wants them to stay on Rocky

River as long as they can be kept. He wants them to think that he is dead."

"Grey is a coward," replied Limerick. "Perhaps we can frighten him away. I don't think he will stay long, anyway, for he must see now that his game is up. Perhaps he will go out as soon as he recovers from the drubbing I gave him. If he is fool enough to visit the Whartons, he'll get another thumping from young Henry."

An hour later, Ned Limerick and Dan Mitchell arrived at Pierre McAvity's cabin and demanded Limerick's books, fishing tackle, and dunnage bag. Grey was not to be seen. The things were produced by Sue and her mother. The men returned to Dan's place with the outfit, for Ned had decided to put up under the same roof with Smith for a few days at least. He felt that by keeping in close touch with Smith his chances would be better of blocking any moves Grey might make of bringing Smith and his children together. He suspected that something of the kind would be Grey's next move; that he would show the iron claw now, having lost the glove of velvet, and would do the Smiths as much injury, and shame them as deeply, as possible.

Limerick made the journey to his friends' camp in the afternoon. Smith was not in sight, of course; but Limerick knew that he was watching them all from cover. Alice suggested that the three of them should go back to the settlements immediately, for she was fearful that Henry would get into a fight with Grey. This suggestion appealed strongly to Limerick; but he thought of Smith, and said that it would be wiser to remain on the river until Grey had disclosed his real character yet more fully.

"It would be a sign of weakness to run away from

him," he said. "He knows who you are. Very well. Let us wait and see what use he means to make of the information."

"He has let you see his hand," said Henry, "and now let him show it to us. I feel that he has something up his sleeve that we don't know about—and I want to see it. We'll not run from him, anyway. We were here first, and we'll stay as long as we choose. There are three of us to protect you from his insults, Alice—counting Sol Gabe Sol swears that he is our man, to the last ditch. Where is Grey now?"

Limerick told them how Grey had taken his own place under the roof of the wild and simple McAvitys.

Limerick started for home about an hour before sunset, and though he kept a sharp look out for Smith on the way he saw nothing of him. It was ten o'clock when Smith appeared at Dan's place. He was haggard and grey from the strain of his emotions, and from lack of sleep. He smoked for an hour, listening to the talk of his friends, but offering no comment. Then he went to bed; but it was close upon dawn before sleep closed his staring eyes and calmed his aching and affrighted heart.

Smith and Limerick slept late next morning, the older man from sheer fatigue, the younger from a drowsiness caused, perhaps, by the slight wound on his head. But the other members of the household were astir early; and it was at a very early hour that Ellen May rode out on Red Boy, with a revolver in the pocket of her short skirt, to keep an eye on Smith's interests. This was fortunate for Henry Wharton, as you shall see.

Henry Wharton left camp immediately after an early breakfast, and headed upriver, leaving strict injunctions that both Alice and Sol Gabe were to keep

close to the camp until his return. Sol nodded and showed Henry the butt of a revolver shining from his hip pocket. Alice saw to it that Henry carried nothing more offensive than a fishing-rod.

Henry's intention was to scout around and gather some information concerning his neighbours. He wanted to see the McAvitys and the Mitchells—and, perhaps, he would be lucky enough to run across Percy Grey. His thoughts of Grey were bitter beyond description. He was of a peculiarly trusting and friendly nature. He had liked Grey from the first, and believed him to be one of the finest and most generous of men ; and now his admiration and friendship were turned to rage and hate, and his opinion of himself was poisoned with disgust. He had been made a fool of—and the more easily a man is fooled the less he likes it when his eyes are opened. He despised himself almost as heartily as he despised the polished and crafty man of the world. He had done his best to help Grey fool Alice ! He cursed himself bitterly for that ; and he thanked God that Ned Limerick had happened to be on the river. He flung his rod, in its case, into the bushes, and hurried up the narrow valley with empty hands and a full heart.

Henry kept a sharp look out for clearings in the forest, and, after a walk of a few miles, he discovered one to his right. He climbed the short, steep bank, knowing that this must be Pierre McAvity's place.

The stump-dotted clearing and the low cabin made a peaceful scene in the fresh, clean light. The men and Mrs. McAvity were at work in a field of new-land potatoes and corn half a mile back from the river. The kitchen door stood open, a cow grazed among the stumps, but no human being was in sight. Henry went up to the open door and looked within. The

combined kitchen and living room was empty; but a fire burned in the unblackened stove, and soiled dishes stood in piles upon a sloppy table, with a dish-pan beside them full of hot water. Henry knocked sharply on the open door without knowing clearly what he was about. He wanted to see some one; but he had not quite made up his mind as to whether or not he was ready to come to grips with Percy Grey just then. His heart told him he was ready, his brain cautioned him to wait and let Grey make another move.

CHAPTER XX

ELLEN MAY TO THE RESCUE

A DOOR in the left wall of the kitchen opened, and Sue McAvity looked out. She had expected to see Ned Limerick, no doubt, and she stared at Henry in blank astonishment. Morning calls from strange young men are not common on Rocky River.

"Good morning," said Henry. "May I speak to Mr. Grey?"

"He ain't in," replied the girl, withdrawing her face swiftly, and shutting the door with a bang.

"The devil he isn't!" exclaimed Henry, with a quick, dark shadow of anger on his face that made it look dangerous. "I'll call that."

He stepped into the kitchen and hammered on the closed door.

"Tell him I want to speak to him," he cried, "or I'll come in. Tell him to come out, confound him! You're there, Grey. I know you're there."

He had scarcely finished speaking when the door was pulled wide, disclosing Grey himself on the threshold. Henry's first glance went beyond Grey and swiftly explored the little room. The window was open, and Susan was gone. Then the eyes of the men met. Grey's face was bruised, and one eye was half closed and richly coloured. His sound eye regarded the intruder with a question, and his lips sneered.

"So here you are, after all," remarked Henry

thickly. "You evidently got through your business in Europe sooner than you expected to."

"You have seen Limerick, I suppose," returned the other.

"Yes, you swine, we have seen Limerick!" cried Henry, throwing caution and reserve to the winds. "Yes, you bounder, I've seen him. So you are the man who refused to marry my sister, are you? You! Why, she saw through you from the first—and despised you."

"This won't do," replied Grey, curbing his temper with an effort that twisted his sore face. "It is childish, Henry. You accepted my friendship—and now, because Limerick tells you some cock-and-bull story, you come here and insult me."

"You seem to know all about it. How's that? You're a good guesser."

"You forget something, I think."

"I forget nothing. I wish to heaven I could forget. Have you seen Limerick since he beat you up—and since you shot at him from the bushes?"

"I have heard him; but as you do not want to hear my side of the story, we may as well drop it and get to something else. Your honoured father is, perhaps, a timely subject for conversation. Have you seen him lately? No? Chance plays some queer tricks. It is queer, for instance, that you should have come for your little outing to your worthy father's hiding place. But perhaps Limerick has not told you."

"I wonder if you could speak a word of truth if you tried," retorted the other, stepping quickly into the bedroom and slapping him smartly across the mouth with the palm of his open hand. "Take that, you liar; and if you want more, come outside and get it."

Grey reeled back with a snarl of fury, then sprang at Henry. He was the taller and heavier of the two; but Wharton had led the simple life of late—a thing which Grey had never done. Henry knocked Grey's fists aside and hit him on the jaw. Then they clinched and staggered about the little room.

"You fool!" snarled Grey. "I'm telling you the truth, damn you!"

But Henry was too far gone in rage to hear or understand. They reeled about until the backs of Grey's knees came in sharp contact with the cot. Down they slammed, twisting and heaving, with the smaller man on top. The cot shook for a moment, then flattened beneath them. Henry wrenched himself clear and sprang backward to his feet, half blind with rage, yet alert and keen. Grey arose more slowly, breathing heavily. His uninjured eye glanced fleetingly at a little table behind the other.

"Don't be a fool," he gasped. "Don't be a savage. Talk it over."

Henry did not reply, but followed that fleeting glance and beheld a revolver on the little table, half covered by a cloth cap. He made a half-turn, quick as a cat, snatched up the weapon, and hurled it through the open window; and in the same instant Grey jumped for him. Henry landed a glancing blow on the jaw before the clinch. Then the wrestling began again.

Sue, who had left the room by way of the window, and entered the house again by the kitchen door, now decided that her new friend was in a fair way of getting another beating So far, she had watched the struggle from the kitchen, expecting to see Grey overpower the smaller man at any moment; but now she snatched a stick of stove wood from behind the

stove—rock maple was the variety—and stepped noiselessly into the bedroom, prepared to turn the battle at one blow. But she needed an opportunity for a clean blow, and that was not an easy thing to get, so fierce and shifting was the fight. She intended to hit hard and fair on the head, and she did not want to take any chance of hitting the wrong head. Henry Wharton was far too intent on the trouble in hand to notice her; but Grey saw her, across his enemy's shoulder, and understood. Grey was feeling very sick by this time, what with lack of wind, aching muscles, and tingling jaw. He knew that he would be down and out in another half-minute, unless something unusual happened. His glance met the girl's for an instant, and a look of understanding passed between them. The girl drew nearer, and Grey put forth all his strength to hold his enemy steady for a moment. Sue raised her club of rock maple, waiting for the chance to strike with glowing eyes and back-drawn lips. She was all animal then—all human animal, and that is the worst kind.

The three in the room heard a sudden sound outside. Sue saw the flank of a big red horse at the window; and in the next second Ellen May Mitchell slid down from the horse and leaned across the sill. She thrust one arm full length into the room, and at the end of it was a big blue-black revolver. Her eyes shone with blue fire like the flame of the August sun in the heart of an iceberg.

"Drop that stick!" she cried.

The men fell apart, and Sue dropped the stick to the floor with a thump. Henry saw at a glance the peril from which he had been saved in the nick of time. Then his eyes, with the eyes of the others, were turned to the girl at the window. An electric

silence filled the air, and all movement was suspended for fully a minute. Then Henry moved. He went swiftly out of the room, and out of the house, and joined his deliverer at the open window. His shoulder touched Ellen May's; but she did not move just then, or so much as turn her head to look at him. She continued to regard the two in the room with fine scorn and loathing Most faces, when inspired by these potent and distorting emotions, are terrible to behold; but Ellen May's face was even more beautiful now than in repose. While she flashed her silent scorn at the two in the room, and they looked back at her with sullen and hangdog eyes, Henry Wharton, at her elbow, gazed at her with an expression of wonder and admiration that would have proved laughable to a disinterested onlooker.

"Beasts!" exclaimed Ellen May. "Cowards! But you are the worst—you who consider yourself an educated man. Oh, I know who you are. I know all about you."

The expression of Grey's face changed. Something of the chagrin faded, and a flicker of interest appeared. His sound eye brightened and warmed, and he braced his sore shoulders with a hint of his usual assurance—the assurance of the polished and world-wise conqueror of women.

"I wish I could say the same of you," he said, with a quick smile; "but I am grieved to have to admit that you have the advantage of me."

"You may well call it an advantage," retorted the girl, her voice high and hard. "And it is an advantage of which I intend to make the most—my family and I, and every right-thinking person on the river." She looked at Sue with mingled pity and scorn in her fine eyes. "Even *she* would despise you if she knew what I know."

This shaft went through the man's hide-thick vanity, and caused him to wince perceptibly. It also served to arouse Sue, though she had not the faintest idea what it was all about. She knew that this high-headed Mitchell girl was making light of her, cheapening her, before two men; and she knew that she cut a poor figure there, even in Grey's eyes, so long as the other young woman occupied the open window.

"Shut your mouth!" she screamed, in sudden and reckless Iroquois fury, made vocal by her French blood. In her rage—in her instinctive impulse of self-protection against the superior attractions of another woman—she forgot the revolver for a moment.

"Shut up, an' go home an' mind yer own business!" she cried.

Grey turned a twisted face upon her.

"And I'll trouble you to mind yours," he hissed. Then he turned politely back to the window. "I am sorry that you should have such a poor opinion of me," he continued. "It is strange that you should know anything about me, good or bad, as I am new to this country. I was not aware that I had any enemies on Rocky River; but it is quite evident that I have, and that they have been telling lies to you about me."

Ellen May turned her shoulder to him and looked at Henry Wharton. She caught the look of frank admiration in his eyes, and the light in her own eyes softened, and colour returned to her cheeks.

"Thank you," said Henry, addressing her for the first time. "You saved me from a nasty crack on the head."

Her eyes were clear wells, with thoughts in them like bright water flowers; and even when they froze with anger and scorn, their depths were not veiled.

"Let us go away from here," she said, averting her glance. "I am on my way to your camp, to see your sister."

She slipped the revolver into her pocket and laid hold of Red Boy's bridle. Henry turned with her, his rage and the existence of his enemy forgotten for the moment. He cast furtive glances at her, absorbing her image from heels to head with the most profound approval. She felt these glances, though she did not meet them, and blushed for the shortness of her skirts. They were half-way to the river, walking slowly, with the big gelding between them, before the voice of Percy Grey brought them tumbling back to the grim realities of life on Rocky River.

"Don't forget what I told you, Henry," said Grey politely. "Ask Miss Mitchell, if you doubt my word. He is the honoured guest of her family, I believe. But ask Ned Limerick. He knows all about him."

Wharton stopped as if he had walked against a stone wall. He did not turn to the window, however, but looked across the gelding's back at Ellen May with a pinched and stricken face. She halted and gazed back at him with shadows of pain and pity in her eyes.

"We might arrange to call together—and take Alice along with us," suggested Grey.

Ellen May faced about at that, with the revolver again in her hand.

"If I hear another word from you, I'll shoot you to death as I'd shoot a mad dog," she said.

Grey laughed easily—at least, it sounded easy—but he retired from the window and kept quiet.

"Is it true?" asked Henry faintly. "He says my father is here."

"Let us go on," said the girl. "Let us get out of

sight and sound of that house. That man is a devil, I do believe."

They descended the bank, Red Boy sliding between them, and turned downstream. They went fifty yards or so before speaking again Then the girl said: "If you are the son of Mr. Wilbur Smith, your father is here on Rocky River. He does not want you to know it; but now it would be useless to deny it to you. He knows that you and your sister are here. He has seen you both. He often watches you—from the bushes."

"From the bushes," repeated the young man dully. "You say he is hiding here on Rocky River; but why does he hide from us?"

"He dare not face you. The shame of it. It would break his heart."

"I am his son. He was a kind father. As for the shame, my sister and I have known that already. Where is he now?"

"He is at our house, I think. He slept late this morning, for he has been awake all through the last two nights. But you must not see him. He has suffered enough—terribly. You must not force him to show himself; for he has suffered in more ways than you know—at the hands of his enemies. He would never forgive me if he knew that I have told you so much. If you are his son, have pity on him—as we have."

"Pity for him? Yes, I pity him, heaven knows! But I do not understand. How did he come here?—and what has Grey to do with it? Grey is my enemy now. Is my father safe here? How is it that the law has not traced him to this place? And how long has Grey known that he was hiding here?"

Then Ellen May did an extraordinary thing. She

halted, pressed her arms and face against the horse's shoulder, and burst into tears.

"I cannot explain," she sobbed. "It is cruel of you to urge me."

Henry stumbled around the gelding and stood close to the girl in an agony of remorse and confusion. He stared at her heaving shoulders, her bowed head, the back of her slender neck.

"What have—I done?" he stammered. "I didn't mean to—say anything I shouldn't. I don't want to be cruel—to you—or to my poor father—— Don't explain—if you don't want to. For heaven's sake, don't cry! *Please* don't cry!"

But the girl continued to sob against the gelding's red shoulder.

"I know that you are my father's friend," continued Henry. "You would befriend any one in danger, I think—and any one in need of pity. I'll not urge you—to take me to him; but you must tell me how I can defend him—from the law and his enemies. Help me to do this. Is he safe here, now that Grey has become my enemy?"

Ellen May raised her head and turned her face to him wet with tears.

"I don't know," she said, in a broken voice. "He says that Grey cannot harm him—with the law. He has wonderful courage. He is afraid of nothing but—but his children's shame of him. He wants you to believe him dead."

"Our shame," cried the young man. "It is our right, our duty, to comfort him and protect him."

"Will you promise not to tell anything about him to your sister—anything that you have learned to-day—until I have told your father?" she asked. "I will tell him all when I next see him."

"I promise," said Henry.

They walked the rest of the way to camp in silence. They found Alice and Sol Gabe awaiting Henry's return with some anxiety. Sol Gabe shot a glance of keen inquiry at Ellen May when she appeared. She answered it with a reassuring smile. She remained for only half an hour, saying little, and that little about the fishing and the woods. Grey was not mentioned by any one until after her departure for home. Then Henry told Alice that he had seen Grey and found him to be everything that Limerick had said.

"I think he'll soon pack up and go home," he concluded. "Whatever his game was, I should say it is up, now that he is unmasked. He is a coward as well as a cad; and I don't imagine he relishes the idea of another drubbing from Ned. We'll hold on, anyway."

"Where did you run across Ellen May?" asked Alice, eyeing him intently.

"She happened along when I was rowing with Grey, at Pierre's place. She was on her way to see you, so we came along together."

"She is fine. She makes me think of a hamadryad; but I did not know that in real life a girl brought up in the backwoods could suggest a nymph."

"Yes, she is rather a remarkable young woman—that is, for a place like this," replied Henry.

"Or for any place," said Alice. "I find her wonderfully attractive."

"Do you?" returned Henry, avoiding his sister's glance.

Ned Limerick arrived at the Whartons' camp shortly before noon. On his way downstream he had met Ellen May going up, and had heard the whole

story of Henry's encounter with Grey, of Grey's and her own disclosures, and of Henry's questions.

"We must think of some way of driving Grey off the river before he can do any more mischief," he had said; "but we must not let Smith put an end to him—I regret to say."

The sky clouded over at noon, and soon after the rain began to fall in sheets. It continued to rain all the afternoon; and Limerick remained with his friends until five o'clock.

CHAPTER XXI

GREY'S LAST PLAY

GREY made no move, that night, to see Alice. For one thing, he felt too sore and unnerved to undertake a night expedition; for another, he suspected that Smith might be lurking somewhere about his children's camping-place. He was clever enough to imagine something of Smith's state of mind, and he was wise enough to feel that it would not be safe to meet him in the dark; so he remained at home that night, and gave Pierre five dollars to do sentry-go, armed with a rifle, in front of his window until dawn.

By sunup, Grey gave Sue McAvity the slip and set out for the Wharton camp. He did not keep to the edge of the stream, but climbed into the brush at the top of the left bank, and footed it with circumspection. It was well for his plans that he took this precaution, for he had not gone far on his way before he heard a sound of footsteps on the pebbles below him. He peeped out from his cover and saw Henry moving upstream. This pleased him, for it was Alice whom he wanted to interview—Alice alone. He had money in his pocket with which he hoped to be able to dispose of Sol Gabe—money in one pocket, and a bottle of gin in another. A short time afterward he heard the strokes of an axe, and was lucky enough to discover the Maliseet cutting firewood in a clump of young

birches several hundred yards above the camp. He did not like the way Sol Gabe squared his shoulders and faced him, axe in hand; but he decided to make the best of it, and advanced with a smile.

"I want to see Henry Wharton," he said. "His camp is somewhere near here, isn't it?"

"Gone upriver. Queer thing you don't meet 'im," replied Sol Gabe.

"I didn't come down the bed of the stream," explained Grey. "Is his sister in camp? We are old friends, you know; and I have something very particular to say to one or the other of them—in private."

The Maliseet's eyes were fixed by now on the short neck and square shoulders of the bottle protruding from the visitor's pocket. And the brain of the Maliseet was reasoning swiftly, and the throat of him was itching for a gulp or two of that white liquor. He knew who Grey was, but he did not know the relationship between Smith and the Whartons. Limerick had told him that Grey was one of the two who had amputated Smith's tongue. The Whartons were evidently spies upon Smith, and confederates of Grey. Smith was afraid of them, anyway. What the new trouble was between them and Grey he did not know, but he guessed that Limerick was at the bottom of it. His duty was to guard the interests of the Mitchells, Smith, and himself against the law and all spies. If the spies were already at odds—and of that there could be no doubt—then why not let Grey interview the girl, during her brother's absence, and so add to the trouble. He would remain near enough to guard against the girl's coming to any harm; and he would lie about it to Henry. Let them fight among themselves, he reflected, and go to the devil

away from Rocky River before they nosed about and discovered the bones of the man whom Smith had shot.

Grey produced the bottle. Sol Gabe eyed it coldly, playing up to the traditions of his race. Grey produced a ten-dollar bill. The Maliseet snarled at that and took the bottle.

"You go talk to the girl," he said. "I stop here fifteen minutes, maybe. No more, anyhow."

He dug the cork from the bottle with the point of his knife, and drank deep. Grey went quickly on his way without another word.

Grey found Alice Wharton fishing in a pool just below the tents. He appeared suddenly from the bushes behind her, close to her; and she let her rod fall into the water, and her face lost every vestige of its colour. He saw, at the first glance, that lying would not serve him.

"Your father, Wilbur Smith, is in hiding on this river," he said. "Henry knows it, for I told him about it yesterday. Limerick knows it. The police will soon hear of it, unless I find him a new hiding-place, and shut the mouths of the people about here with money."

She stared at him with wide, frightened eyes, dazed and speechless.

"I found this place for him last year," continued Grey gently, deciding that half-lies were better in this case than whole ones. "But I fear that he will not be safe here much longer. A hint will reach the police before long, of a certainty. I know of a place in Alaska where he will be safe—safe and comfortable. I can take him to the place, and keep him there, and shut the mouths of the people here—even the mouth of Ned Limerick."

"Is my father here—and alive?" whispered Alice, in a ghost voice.

"Yes, and I only can save him," replied the man, moving nearer. "I will do it—but not for his own sake, Alice. I will do it for yours."

"No," she said faintly. "Not for my sake."

"For your love!" he exclaimed, and caught her in his arms.

Her mind and muscles were numb with the thing she had heard, and for several seconds he crushed her in his embrace. His inhuman blood was afire with passion. Suddenly her mind cleared, and her muscles awoke, and she began to struggle desperately. He laughed low and sought her lips with his, holding her so tight that his arms hurt her.

Sue, the jealous and suspicious, had tracked her lover of a day. She crouched in the bushes on the other bank; and now, mad with jealousy, she raised Pierre's rifle to her shoulder and fired blindly, careless as to which of them received the bullet, uncaring as to whether or not it killed them both.

Grey's face was close to Alice's. She did not hear the report of the rifle, so desperately was she struggling; but she saw the flame fade in those hateful eyes so near her own, the colour slip from lips and face, and the horrible smile stiffen; she felt the arms relax. She sprang back sharply. Grey swayed, with groping hands and terror in his eyes, and sank at her feet. The girl screamed horribly, again and again.

At the sound of the rifle shot, Sol Gabe sank his axe into a standing tree and loosed his grip on the haft of it. He turned sharply, and his foot upset the half-empty bottle. At the sound of the girl's screaming he began to run at full speed toward the camp.

Sue McAvity passed him, running the other way, rifle in hand. The Maliseet swerved from his course and cried out to her to stop; but she only turned a drawn face and terrified eyes to him for an instant, and ran on. Sol did not follow her. He found Alice still staring down at the unconscious man at her feet. He regained his composure instantly, at seeing that the girl was unharmed, and remembered with a pang of regret that he had upset the bottle of gin.

"Who fired? Who killed him?" whispered Alice.

"Pierre McAvity's girl," replied the Maliseet. "Not dead, anyhow."

He knelt and made a hasty examination of the wound in Grey's side. The long, clean bullet had struck the ribs a glancing blow.

"Scart, mostly," said Sol Gabe, with scorn in his voice. "Not hurt so bad as me," he added, showing the fresh, red scar on his wrist. "Rib broke some, maybe; but he don't die, I guess. Bleed some, what? Dan Mitchell's wife fix him a'right. Dern good doctor."

Alice sat down and hid her face in her hands.

"Don't you care," said the woodsman kindly. "Bad man, Grey. Dern bad. You don't like him, what?"

Grey opened his eyes and stared upward, and fear shone white in them. He moved his lips, at first without sound.

"Am I—shot?" he asked, in a faint and horrible voice.

"Yes. Shot a'mighty bad," replied Sol Gabe calmly, gazing down at him. "Sue done it. Bleedin' like hell, you bet."

"Am I dying?"

"Guess you die pretty damn quick."

"Do something! Can't you do something?" cried Grey, in a stronger voice. "Man, I have money. Dress my wound. Get a doctor. I will give you a thousand dollars—five thousand—to save my life."

"Dress his wound," moaned Alice. "Do something for him."

"Ain't worth five thousand dollar," said Sol Gabe dispassionately. "You wait one minute, then I fix you pretty good. Maybe you don't die yet."

He stepped over the prostrate form and laid a hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Come along," he whispered. "Wanter talk a little bit with you."

Alice got up weakly and moved slowly away with him, far too dazed and terrified to wonder at all at the guide's manner and request.

"He ain't hurt much," said the Maliseet; "but I make him think so. He come up here to make trouble. Now I take him downriver an' send him out to see a doctor, what. He come up here to spy on Smith."

"Smith," moaned the girl.

"Yes, Smith. Maybe you an' Henry come for that, too. What?"

"No, no!" cried she. "We did not—come for that. We did not know he was here. He is—our father."

"Who your father?"

"Smith. We did not know—where he was."

The Maliseet stared at her incredulously for several seconds.

"You know what Grey do to your father?" he asked. "You know that?"

She shook her head, trembling in every limb. Her eyes were flooded with tears.

"What for was Smith scart of you, then?" demanded Sol Gabe sternly.

"Not of me," sighed Alice drearily. "I am his daughter. Henry and I did not know he was here; we thought him dead, perhaps. That man—Grey—says that the police will soon discover him."

Before the Maliseet could reply, Ned Limerick stepped out of the underbrush, hatless, and breathing heavily.

"You are not hurt!" he cried, gazing anxiously at the girl. "Thank God for that! We thought we heard a shot—and then we heard some one scream, I'll swear. What was it? What is the trouble here?"

Sol Gabe explained it all in a few choppy sentences.

"The fool!" cried Limerick. "I wish to heaven that wild girl had shot straighter while she was about it. But he has played his last card. He can do no more harm to any of you, dear."

"But the police," she faltered.

"He'll not send the police to Rocky River," replied Ned grimly. "I can promise you that. Do you trust me, Alice?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then will you give me your promise to remain here until I come back for you—right here? I must interview Grey, in private."

"You—you do not mean to—harm him?"

"I promise you that we'll not lay a hand on him, except in succour."

She promised not to move from where she stood. He kissed her once reverently, then beckoned to Sol Gabe and moved away to where Grey lay out of sight

beyond a screen of water willows and alders. They found Grey sitting bolt upright, with some colour in his face. Limerick breathed a word in Sol Gabe's ear, and Sol nodded his head, then whistled a few soft notes in imitation of the song of the white-throat sparrow. At that, Smith came out of the bushes and gazed at Grey with his round, opaque black eyes. The man of the world went grey as ashes. Limerick spoke a few words to Smith in a low voice. Smith wrote a few on his pad. Limerick considered them, then asked the Maliseet to go back and wait with Alice. Sol Gabe complied with the request without an objection, feeling that he already knew more than was healthy of the affairs of his friend Smith. The other two stood in front of Grey within a yard of him, and Limerick produced a paper from an inner pocket.

"Did you murder Knoxley, to save yourself the sum of five thousand dollars?" he asked.

Grey was in terror of his life, and the question had to be repeated before he grasped the sense of it.

"Knoxley? I know nothing about him. What do you mean?" he stammered.

"Do you deny that you paid him three thousand dollars in cash, and gave him a written promise for five thousand more, in payment for amputating this man's hand and tongue?" asked Limerick.

Grey closed his eyes weakly for a second, then opened them heavily.

"I did not kill him," he said, in a faint voice. "I deny everything. As you know yourself, he was lost in these woods."

"And found," said Limerick. "Found dead, by a trapper and a settler, with the written

promise in his pocket. I hold the paper in my hand now."

Grey was dazed with terror.

"I gave him the paper—yes, and the money—but I did not kill him," he whispered.

"I wonder if you could prove that to the satisfaction of the law of this country," said the other. "Perhaps you could clear yourself of the murder—but not of the other in a hundred years. What do you suggest?"

Grey thought hard for a long time—hard, but not clearly. He glanced once at the tongueless and handless man, and shook with terror.

"The law is on my side!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"Then I'll send Sol Gabe out for the police," said Limerick.

"No!" cried Grey. "Let him take me out—to a doctor. I am wounded. Let me go away. You'll never hear of me again—any of you."

"We'll have that on paper," said the other, producing a fountain pen. "Write it yourself, to my dictation."

Grey's mind was a little clearer by this time. He reasoned that a signed statement, forced from him and witnessed by these two, could be of little value to them in a court of law; but even so, he balked at much that Limerick told him to write. At last it was all down.

"And now your signature," said Limerick.

Grey signed the statement, racking his brain even then for some way of breaking, and at the same time defending himself against, this written promise. He had money to buy the services of men who knew the law inside and out—and the devil was awake in him again.

"And here are your witnesses," said Limerick.

Grey looked up and saw Dan Mitchell and Ellen May. These two put their signatures to the paper without a word; but neither Smith nor Limerick touched pen to it. Grey saw that the game was up.

CHAPTER XXII

SMITH SETTLES HIS SCORE

The Mitchells and Smith turned and entered the bushes, and made their way upstream. Limerick went back to Alice. An hour later, Grey and Sol Gabe set out for the village at the mouth of the river. They had departed before Henry Wharton got back to camp. Henry had gone all the way to the Mitchell farm, and found every one from home but Mrs. Mitchell; but on his way back he had found Dan Mitchell and Ellen May at the McAvity cabin, and the McAvitys gone, bag and baggage. Limerick explained the hurried departure of the McAvity family by telling him of Sue's shooting of Grey.

"And we are rid of Grey," he said, and explained something of that.

"You know more of this than you have told us, Ned," said Henry. "What had Grey to do with my father's being here? And if you are our father's friend, cannot you persuade him to let us see him and speak to him? Why does he treat us as if we were his enemies?"

Limerick looked searchingly at the girl, and then at Henry.

"Your father and I are friends, now," he said.

The colour faded slowly from his face, and he gazed at Alice with despairing eyes.

"I must tell you the whole miserable story," he continued, with an effort. "I have your father's

permission to do so. Then you will know the worst of both of us. I put myself at your mercy. Remember, when you have heard, that I could safely have kept silence—that I risk my happiness—your trust and love, Alice—that there may be no shameful secret of my life hidden from you."

He told them the whole miserable and humiliating story, complete to the last ghastly detail which Smith had confessed to him that very day. He told them of the weak and wicked tool he had been in Grey's hands; of his return to the river, and his remorse; of Smith's courageous life after his maiming; of Smith's swift murder of the unspeakable Knoxley; everything.

The children of Wilbur Smith listened without a word of interruption, their young faces now blanched with horror, their lips now quivering with pity, their eyes now dark and troubled with shame.

Limerick turned to the girl with a haggard face.

"You know me now," he said, with a brave attempt at steadiness. "Have I lost all?"

Alice gazed at him with tear-dimmed, unseeing eyes. Henry looked at her with eyes but little drier than her own, and a sudden-flushing face.

"Don't you understand?" he cried huskily. "Ned was made a fool of. Will you turn on him now—for telling you the truth—if you really love him?"

"I was thinking of ourselves," she said slowly. "I am the daughter of a murderer."

"Not that, by heaven!" cried Henry. "I'd have shot the devil myself, in father's place!"

"And I, too," said Ned Limerick, catching the girl in his arms.

Some hours later, Limerick set out to find Smith, having promised Alice and Henry that he would do

his best to bring about a meeting. He found Smith at last, in the woods behind Dan's riverside fields, and told him that he had made a clean breast of everything to the son and daughter.

"I was there," wrote Smith. "I saw it all. I saw the horror on their faces. And I heard. She spoke the truth when she called me a murderer. She has forgiven it, I believe; but she will not understand the hell that was in my heart when I shot Knoxley. She is a woman. She will never forget it—and she will always feel horror at the memory."

"She felt horror, of course," said Limerick, "horror at me as well as at you; but she has forgiven us both. Her love for you is greater than her pity, her horror, or her shame."

Smith sat idle for several minutes, staring straight in front with fixed gaze and set jaws, the pencil shaking a little in the fingers of his one hand.

"I trust you," he wrote at last, with the other reading each word as it appeared. "I am glad I did not shoot you that night I watched you through the window. You will be a good husband to my girl. A love that can stand for the father she has must be a great love."

"It is a great love, God knows," interrupted Limerick; "but I must tell you—and it's the truth—I'm beginning to like you for yourself. You have played the man here on Rocky River."

"But the cold fact remains that I am a miserable sinner—a thief, a liar, and a murderer," wrote Smith. "You will be good to my girl, and you will be a true friend to my boy. They are safe from Grey. So it would be better now if I were dead. The truth about me is written on my arm—my epitaph, as if I were already dead. I am unfit to die; but am I not still

more unfit to live? Maimed, and branded, and known—how am I to let my children see me?"

"Do not lose your courage now!" exclaimed Limerick. "You have found your children, and they know and have forgiven the worst of you; you have made friends of simple and honest people; you have disarmed your worst enemy. Now is the time to take new courage, rather than to let the old slip."

"My worst enemy is in my own heart," wrote Smith slowly.

Then he tore the sheets of paper to scraps and flung them away. He got heavily to his feet and extended his hand, which the young man grasped warmly; and then he turned and walked deeper into the woods. Limerick followed him and called after him. He turned and smiled kindly, but his face was grey.

"What is it that you are thinking of?" asked Limerick. "Do you mean to play the coward now—to take your own life? Come back with me and let Ellen May talk to you. Would you be such a monster?—to break their hearts now—after all that you have done? I have learned to think of you as a man; but if you do this thing then you'll prove yourself more of a devil than I ever thought you!"

For a second or two Smith's face darkened and changed, and was in truth the face of a devil; but even while the other's blood chilled at the sight of it, it cleared and softened again, and the red shadow went out of the eyes.

Smith produced his pencil and paper, and wrote: "I promise you that I will not take my life to-day."

Beyond this, the other could get no promise from him; and he refused absolutely to go to the house and be reasoned with by Ellen May.

Dan Mitchell and his daughter and Ned Limerick

visited the camp downriver that evening, and remained there until ten o'clock. Limerick was on the point of telling Alice and Henry his suspicion that their father contemplated suicide, but could not quite force his tongue to it. He felt that he had made enough horrible and heart-racking disclosures for one day, and that this would keep until the morning. He decided to tell the Mitchells about it on the way home, and organize a guard to keep a watch on Smith first thing in the morning.

Smith did not sleep at the Mitchells' place that night. The discovery of his absence was made by Ned Limerick very early on the following morning. A chill of anxiety and apprehension seized upon the household, and Ellen May, Dan, and Limerick set out immediately in search of their friend. The girl went downriver, in the hope that she would find Smith on his way home after having spent the night in lurking about the camp of his sleeping children. Dan went upstream, and Ned entered the forest behind the clearings; and both went with heavy hearts, and eyes alert to take alarm at anything that might look like a huddled shape on the ground. They understood the man's desolation of shame, his horror of being seen by his children, and known by them in his maimed and branded body. They both felt that his desperate spirit was still untamed, and would drive the tortured mind and flesh to a last desperate play.

Ellen May did not find Smith on the river. He was not at his children's camp. She did not question Alice and Henry, for fear of causing them needless alarm. Dan Mitchell came upon no sign of Smith on the upper waters of the river. He reached home early in the afternoon. Limerick arrived at the farmhouse an hour later; and his search, also, had been

fruitless. Eliza Mitchell was in tears. Ellen May's face was white as paper. Dan paced the veranda, a cold pipe between his teeth, and Ned Limerick sat on the bottom step and started at every sound.

"We must do something!" cried Ellen May at last. "We must hunt for him again."

Limerick got to his feet; and at the same moment a figure appeared beyond the clearing, at the top of the river bank.

"It's Sol Gabe," said Dan Mitchell thickly "What the devil! How'd he git back so quick—from takin' that skunk, Grey, down to the mouth?"

Nobody answered him. All gazed at the approaching Maliseet with fixed eyes. Sol Gabe advanced slowly; but at last he stood at the bottom of the veranda steps.

"Dead," he said. "I bury him and come back."

"Grey?" asked Limerick, in a cracked voice.

"Sure, Grey. Shot."

"Did he die of that wound? It was nothing."

"Shot again. Don't know who done it. Maybe that girl."

Ellen May crouched upon the floor of the veranda, and hid her face between her hands. She knew, and they all knew, that Wilbur Smith had broken his word and taken his revenge in blood.

Dan Mitchell drove his right fist into the palm of his left hand.

"So be it!" he cried, glaring around. "So be it—and, by all that's holy, I think none the worse of him for it!"

Ellen May and Limerick set out immediately for the Whartons' camp. They were quite sure now that Smith would make away with himself. Sol Gabe remained at the farm; and it was hastily planned

that he should remain there for two more days, at least, then circle around and enter the camp of his employers from downstream, with word that he had seen Grey safely off for civilization.

Ellen May and Limerick said nothing to the Whartons of Sol Gabe's return and tragic story, or of their fears for Wilbur Smith. At ten o'clock they set out for their home, lighted by a yellow moon.

It was several hours after midnight when Alice awoke suddenly, her heart jumping, her eyes open on the instant, every nerve athrill. Something or some one had been near her, and touched her face, but a moment ago! The moon had set; but the sky was bright with stars, and a faint ghost of light filled the little tent. The flaps of the tent hung open. Alice tossed her blankets aside and crawled to the front of the tent. The fire had sunk to a red eye filmed at the edges with grey ash. Grey and black shadows, and the vague starshine, crowded close about it.

The girl slipped into her blanket robe and crawled from the tent. Her heart told her that the visitor had been her father. She moved fearfully about the little clearing, searching the queer shadows with her eyes, groping with her hands. She called to him, to her father, in a voice as faint as a whisper. She neither saw nor heard anything of him, and was afraid to carry her search into the ghostly woods. She soon returned to her tent and blankets, and, after lying wide awake for an hour, waiting and listening, sank into a peaceful sleep.

She woke again shortly after dawn, and by the grey light found that upon her pillow which she had not noticed before. It was a small square of paper written upon with pencil.

"Trust Ned Limerick, and the Mitchells, and Sol Gabe," she read. "They have been good friends to me in my shame and bitterness; but now comes a shame which I dare not face. I have sinned terribly, and I have been sinned against; but in one thing have I played the man—in my love for my children and their mother. I kissed you to-night—both of you. Farewell."

Alice stared at the paper, and the firm lettering danced and floated before her tear-dimmed, horror-stricken eyes. Then she understood. She went bravely to Henry's tent, knelt beside him, awakened him, and placed the little square of paper in his hand.

It was Ned Limerick who found the body of Wilbur Smith. The revolver was still gripped in the square left hand. The grey face was upturned to the green roof of the forest. The grim lips and formidable eyes were softened as if by the shadow of peace.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAST CHAPTER

No officer of the law ever came to Rocky River in search of the vanished Grey, for the simple reason that, when he had set out for Rocky River, from New York, a few days after landing from Liverpool, he had been very particular to tell his friends and his servants that he was bound for the Catskills. All the Catskills country was beaten over; but that was months after Grey's death. Nothing was discovered of his whereabouts or his fate; but a man who used to know him well was heard to state his belief that Grey had played the absolute, utter cad once too often with some woman somewhere.

The habitat of the McAvitys was unknown to the people of Rocky River until Sol Gabe went over into the Tobique country one September to "cruise" a tract of timber for Scott, McKeen and Company. A job of this nature was not in Sol Gabe's regular line, though his knowledge of timber was accurate and extensive. He had obtained the job by a stroke of luck, having the previous autumn led a grandson of old Alexander Scott to within easy range of two bull-moose, each bull with an antler-spread of over fifty inches. Also, he had fed that appreciative youth with the most admirable of "flap-jacks," and had talked knowingly to him of timber. So it happened that Sol Gabe, of Rocky River, went adventuring for

a few months, at a dignified white man's wage, into the far Tobique country.

Sol had been tramping in the green gloom of those high forests, skirting nameless lakes and wading the shallows of nameless streams for three weeks when, just before sundown one frosty evening, he happened upon a stumpy clearing. In the middle of the clearing stood a log cabin with a thread of smoke arising from its rough chimney of grey stone. A low barn and stable of logs squatted behind the cabin. A stack of yellow oat-straw and one of rusty-red buckwheat straw flanked the barn. All this looked good to Sol Gabe. He was as pleased by the sight as he was astonished by it. He had not expected to find an inhabited clearing in a situation so far removed from the settlements, so hemmed in on every side by miles and miles of tall timber, nameless water, and solitude—here in the farthest wilderness of the province, in the land of furtive beasts, untrapped forests and unfished streams, beyond even the sound of the lumberman's axe. He pictured, with a pleasurable glow at his heart, the warm, fire-lit room, the supper of fried pork and fried eggs, the talk and smoke with the hospitable pioneer. His own supply of salt pork was very low: he had not seen an egg in three weeks: he was already cutting into his last plug of tobacco: and, last but not least, he had not seen a human being to converse with since leaving Alec Moore's camp on Squaw Lake ten days before.

Sol Gabe smacked the lips of his spirit and crossed the clearing. He looked about him eagerly as he advanced, but saw nobody. A small, black dog appeared around a corner of the barn, eyed him suspiciously, and disappeared. He halted before the low door of rough-hewn timber, unslung his pack,

stood his axe against the log wall, and knocked. The black dog appeared again, approached slinkingly, and sniffed gingerly at the visitor's heels. Sol Gabe turned and displayed his lack of appreciation of the dog's attentions by a swift kick. The dog avoided the kick by a twist of its squirming body, and again retired from view.

"Git out!" said the Maliseet. "Darn yer dirty hide!"

He turned again to the door—and behold, it now stood wide open on its leather hinges! Its rough frame outlined the figure of Susan McAvity. Sol Gabe's eyes met the eyes of the young woman and, for a fraction of a second, expanded with astonishment; but for a fraction of a second only. Instantly their glance veiled. The swarthy face expressed neither surprise nor recognition.

The girl's round face was bloodless beneath its sun-tan. Her eyes were terrified. Sol Gabe knew that she knew him. Neither spoke for a full minute. Neither moved. The little black dog reappeared from behind the corner of the cabin and advanced again upon Sol's legs with an air of mixed diffidence and determination.

"Good day," said the Maliseet, in a flat voice.

The young woman did not reply. Gabe glimpsed the dog out of the corner of one eye, and raised a foot threateningly behind him.

"I come a long way," he said. "Cruisin' timber for ol' man Scott, me. T'ink you maybe bunk me for the night. Grub mighty low, you bet. What?

"I guess so," said the girl, with an effort. And then her manner and face brightened swiftly, as if suddenly illuminated from within by a bright idea. Sol Gabe noticed it.

"Sure thing!" continued the girl, with animation. "Ye're entirely welcome, whoever ye are. Come right in an' set down. Supper'll soon be ready."

Sol Gabe glanced uneasily over his shoulder before complying with her request; but it was not for the black dog that he was looking. He was not afraid of the dog. He grunted his thanks and entered the dim-lit cabin with an unmoved manner; but his spirit was reluctant, and doubt—or was it fear?—dragged at his heels. He was a thinker, and possessed of imagination. He found it easy to guess Sue McAvity's thoughts, emotions and suspicions inspired by his appearance at her father's door in the distant Tobique country. She recognized him, and yet clumsily pretended not to. He saw through that; but he wondered what her game was, and where the other members of the family were keeping themselves.

"Are ye all by yerself?" she asked; and before he could create a better answer he told the truth with a nod and a grunt.

Her new expression of relief and assurance was very disturbing to him. She pointed him to a seat by the hearth. She gave him a plug of tobacco, and begged him to consider himself altogether welcome.

"D'ye live all alone?" he asked, artlessly.

Her bold eyes regarded him with hard amusement. "Maybe, and maybe not," she said. "But don't ye go an' worry about me. The men-folk will be glad to see ye, whoever ye be an' wherever ye come from. We be always glad to see strangers an' give 'em a bunk an' a hand-out."

Sol Gabe thought hard. He weighed weighty questions in his perturbed mind. Would he tell her that he was aware of her knowledge of his identity and of her suspicions, and tell her frankly that he had not

come to the Tobique country in search of her, that he was in no way connected with the police, and that nobody on Rocky River held her shooting of Grey against her—that nobody on Rocky River entertained a desire to see her punished for her crime? He decided that such frankness on his part would be useless. She would not believe him; no member of this ruthless, stupid, fugitive family would believe him.

"Guess I better fetch my pack inside," he said.

He opened the door, picked up the pack and axe and stepped outside. He stood a few seconds with his shoulder to the open door, with one eye on the young woman in the cabin and the other on the outer gloom. He heard voices from the far side of the clearing. He hitched his pack to his shoulders and dashed away into the frosty dusk. He heard Sue McAvity scream, scream in shrill anger for him to come back. There was an immediate threat in her voice. There was murder in her voice. He ran as he had never run before, avoiding the black stumps of the clearing by luck rather than by good management. And then he heard the smashing report of a heavily charged shot-gun behind him and the spatter of the shot against a stump close at hand. He did an impossible thing then—he ran faster than he had been running before. He heard an outburst of voices ringing across the frosty air from irregular distances, and above them all the strong voice of Pierre McAvity, shaken with interrogation and fear.

Sol Gabe continued to run from that desolate cabin until his thighs were like water under the weight of his body and his pack, and his breath was gone; and then, with his breath gone and his legs wobbling, he continued the retirement at a stumbling walk. It

was close upon midnight when he halted at last, lay flat on the moss and slept. He awoke at the first grey hint of dawn, and knew that he had escaped a violent death.

"But I guess I better git out," he reflected. "Git out quick. This Tobique country ain't safe fer one poor Injin from Rocky River."

He got out safely, reported to Scott, McKeen and Company, refused to return to the Tobique to make a further inspection of the timber, refused to give a reason for his refusal, took his pay, got very drunk at Plaster Rock for a few days, and then returned to Rocky River. He told of his discovery and adventure to the Mitchells; but, as far as Sol Gabe and the Mitchells are concerned, the family of McAvity continues to dwell in that far wilderness and in such peace as it can find. To this day Sol Gabe works for Dan Mitchell at certain busy seasons, and fights his strong weakness between them. He is content with the life and with Rocky River. No offer of white man's wages will ever again tempt him abroad.

Henry Wharton continues to use his mother's name, and lives on Rocky River; and Ellen May is his wife. He farms, and operates extensively in lumber. He lives a big, clean, happy life with the happiest wife in the world. He makes money; and, once every year he and Ellen May leave Rocky River and travel by trains and ships to one great city or another, and spend considerable sums of that money. Their home is the pride and wonder of Rocky River. Its exterior is rough in texture and sombre in hue; but its wide low hall is a habitable store-room of the treasures they have collected on their travels. Their farm is big; all their actions and thoughts are big; their hearts are big—there is nothing small about them but their small son, Daniel Wharton.

Ned Limerick and Alice live in France, and spend a few weeks of every summer or autumn on Rocky River. Their happiness is not so absolutely unbroken as Henry's and Ellen May's, for they quarrel twice or thrice each year, for a day or two at a time. It is their nature; but the reconciliation make the quarrels well worth while—and at such times Limerick rises to even higher flights of poetic expression than are usual with him—and that means the breaking of altitude records.

JOHN LONG, LTD., PUBLISHERS, LONDON, ENGLAND, 1921
CAHILL AND CO., LTD., LONDON, DUBLIN AND DROGHEDA

THE BIG LITERARY EVENT OF 1921

THE JOHN LONG £500 PRIZE NOVEL

By a New AUTHOR

With a view to discovering a talented New Writer, Messrs. John Long offered in April, 1920, the Prize of £500 for the BEST First Novel, the Competition for which closed on the 31st December, 1920. £500 is by far the biggest Prize ever offered for a *First* Novel. It is, therefore, not surprising that a very large number of Novels were submitted, and many have been found to attain a really high standard. That selected as the Prize-Winning Novel is indisputably one of surpassing merit, and it is safe to predict that it will prove a real outstanding popular success. The title will be duly announced, and in the meantime those ordering should ask for the John Long £500 Prize Novel.

Ready Spring 1921. *Price* 8s. 6d. *net.*

JOHN LONG, Ltd., Publishers, LONDON

THE NOVELS OF CURTIS YORKE

Morning Post: "Whether grave or gay, the author is a *raconteur* whose imagination and vivacity are unfailing. Few, moreover, have in the same degree the versatility which enables her to provoke peals of laughter and move almost to tears. The writer is natural, realistic and entertaining."

DELPHINE
ENCHANTED
ONLY BETTY
MISS DAFFODIL
OLIVE KINSELLA
WAYWARD ANNE
THEIR MARRIAGE
THE OTHER SARA
MOLLIE DEVERILL
THE GIRL IN GREY
THE WOMAN RUTH
ALIX OF THE GLEN
PATRICIA OF PALL MALL
THE GIRL AND THE MAN
THE WORLD AND DELIA
QUEER LITTLE JANE
A FLIRTATION WITH TRUTH
DANGEROUS DOROTHY
IRRESPONSIBLE KITTY
THE VISION OF THE YEARS

These Novels are published in various editions
Prices from the Booksellers

ALL PUBLISHED BY JOHN LONG, LIMITED
12, 13 & 14 NORRIS STREET, HAYMARKET, LONDON

There is no Substitute

TRADE MARK

Dr. J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne

The Reliable Family Medicine.

THE BEST REMEDY KNOWN FOR

COUGHS, COLDS,

ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS.

A true palliative in

GOUT, RHEUMATISM,
NEURALGIA, TOOTHACHE.

Acts like a charm in

DIARRHŒA, COLIC,

and other Bowel Complaints.

Checks and arrests FEVER, CROUP, AGUE,

Of all Chemists, 1/3 and 3/-

Always ask for a

"DR. COLLIS BROWNE."

USED WITH UNVARYING SUCCESS
IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD
FOR UPWARDS OF 60 YEARS.

Fry's
BREAKFAST COCOA